



NORTH CAROLINA CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION

North Carolina Connections Academy

Public charter schools opening the fall of 2015

Due by 5:00 pm, December 6, 2013

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
NCDPI/Office of Charter Schools
301 N. Wilmington Street
Raleigh NC 27601-2825
919-807-3491

Mailing Address:
6303 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-6303

CHARTER SCHOOL

2013 Application Process

To open a charter school in the 2015-2016 school year

APPLICATION DUE DATE/TIME

- September 6, 2013** A letter of intent to apply for the 2015-2016 school year **must** be received electronically to Deanna Townsend-Smith in the Office of Charter Schools **no later than 12:00 noon at deanna.townsend-smith@dpi.nc.gov**. If the Letter of Intent is not submitted, an application from this group will not be accepted. You can find the Letter of Intent requirements on the NC Office of Charter School web site.
- December 6, 2013** A complete online application package, in the Office of Charter Schools **by 5:00 pm.**
- December 13, 2013** A copy of the application due to the Local Education Agency in which the proposed charter school will reside in. Applicant must provide an attached PDF version as evidence to the Office of Charter Schools (i.e. signed letter).

APPLICATION SPECIFICATIONS

Applicants can submit applications prior to the deadline December 6, 2013 at 5:00 pm. **All applicants must be submitted using the online portal** and applicants are to use the following specifications:

1. All required Appendices should be clearly titled, include page numbers (i.e. Appendix A and page numbers as- A1, A2, B1...), and submitted as a FULL PDF document.
2. Review all elements of your application for completeness before submitting. **An incomplete application will result in the elimination of the application.**
3. Late submissions **will not** be accepted. No exceptions.
4. Provide confirmation electronically to the Office of Charter Schools to deanna.townsend-smith@dpi.nc.gov that within seven (7) days the applicant has provided one full copy of the application to the LEA in which the proposed charter school will be located.

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I. APPLICATION CONTACT INFORMATION

Name of proposed charter school: North Carolina Connections Academy

Has the organization applied for 501(c)(3) non-profit status: Yes No

Name of non-profit organization under which charter will be organized or operated: *North Carolina for Quality Virtual Educa*

Provide the name of the person who will serve as the primary contact for this Application. The primary contact should serve as the contact for follow-up, interviews, and notices regarding this Application.

Name of contact person: *Bryan Setser*

Title/Relationship to nonprofit: *Board President*

Mailing address: 4 San Marcos Avenue
Durham NC 27703

Primary telephone: 919-638-7056 Alternative telephone: 919-287-2639

E-Mail address: *bryan@2revolutions.net*

Name of county and local education agency (LEA) in which charter school will reside:

County: DURHAM

LEA: 320-Durham Public Schools

Is this application a Conversion from a traditional public school or private school?

No:

Yes:

Is this application being submitted as a replication of a current charter school model?

No:

Yes:

What is the name of the nonprofit organization that governs this charter school? North Carolina for Quality Virtual Educa

Is this application for Virtual charter school: Yes: No:

Grade Levels Served and Total Student Enrollment:

Projected School Opening: Year 2015 Month September

Will this school operate on a year round schedule?

No:

Yes:

Proposed Grade Levels Served and Total Student Enrollment (

3
Years)

Academic School Year	Grade Levels	Total Projected Student Enrollment
First Year	06,07,08,09,10,11,12	1000
Second Year	06,07,08,09,10,11,12	1500
Third Year	06,07,08,09,10,11,12	2000

The State Board of Education provides funds to charter schools, approves the original members of the boards of directors of the charter schools, has the authority to grant, supervise, and revoke charters, and demands full accountability from charter schools for school finances and student performance.

I certify that I have the authority to submit this application and that the initial board members and I were regularly involved in the development of this application. All information contained herein is complete and accurate. I realize that any misrepresentation will result in disqualification from the application process or revocation after award. I understand that incomplete applications will not be considered. The person named as the contact person for the application is so authorized to serve as the primary contact for this application on behalf of the non-profit organization.

bsetser
Signature

Bryan Setser Board President
Title

bsetser
Printed Name

12/06/2013
Date

II. MISSION and PURPOSES

(No more than three total pages in this section)

Mission:

*State the Mission of the proposed charter school in **one hundred words or less**. The mission statement defines the organization's purpose and primary objectives, describing why it exists. The mission statement provides the foundation for the entire proposal.*

The mission statement of the proposed charter school is as follows:

This mission of North Carolina Connections Academy (NCCA) is to provide parents a choice for their children in grades 6-12 throughout the state who need an alternative to the traditional public school classroom to maximize their full potential. NCCA will meet the highest performance standards by providing a unique individualized full-time learning program in a public virtual school setting with access to high-quality North Carolina-certified teachers and award-winning curriculum. Parental involvement and engagement will help ensure fidelity to the educational program inside and outside the virtual classroom.

Educational need and Targeted Student Population of the Proposed Charter School:

1. *Provide a description of Targeted Population in terms of demographics. In your description, include how this population will reflect the racial and ethnic composition of the school system in which it is located. Describe the rationale for selecting the location and student body.*

"The workplace and global economy have changed dramatically. Competition and work are global for every type of product and service. Work is completed on 24-hour cycles that depend on a web of technology and people who may be on another continent just as easily in the office next door. Students in our schools need education that reflects the challenges they will face as adults." -Website of North Carolina Superintendent June Atkinson (<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/statesuperintendent/>)

NCCA proposes to operate a statewide virtual school enrolling students in grades 6-12 living throughout the state. The student body will reflect the racial and ethnic composition of the state. The school will address a growing need for students to be educated outside of traditional brick-and-mortar schools, substantiated by the dramatic growth of virtual charter schools across the country. The most recent available national figures count 310,000 students attending fully online schools in the 2012-2013 school year and 30 states plus Washington DC have full-time online schools operating statewide in the 2013-2014 school year (<http://kpk12.com/states/>). Online and blended learning opportunities are now offered in all 50 states, at least for some students (Keeping Pace with K-12 Online Learning 2012, Evergreen Consulting; www.KPK12.com). While brick-and-mortar schools reach students within their physical proximity, a high-quality virtual school can leverage excellent teachers and curriculum to meet the needs of students anywhere in the area served who need a virtual school option.

Statewide schools mirror the demographics of the state. Of the students who attend schools supported by our proposed partner, Connections Academy (a division of Connections Education LLC), over 48.3% met the federal free and reduced meals (FARM) guidelines mirroring the national average of 48.1% (http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d12/tables/dt12_046.asp). According to the Department of Public Instruction's Free and Reduced Lunch Report for the most recent year available, 56% of enrolled students met the federal income guidelines in 2012-2013 (<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/fbs/resources/data/>). We anticipate that NCCA's families will be similar to the state average and will include many of modest means as well as significant numbers of single-parent/dual-working-parent households.

North Carolina reported 184,424 students with disabilities in the 2012-2013 school year (<http://apps.schools.nc.gov/pls/apex/f?p=1:14:1279585925320502::NO::>) and it is tied for 13th in the country for the percentage of English Language Learners (ELL) students according to the U.S. Department of Education (2009-2010) (<http://www.eddataexpress.ed.gov/data-element-explorer.cfm/deid/4/>). Schools supported by Connections have demonstrated success with special needs populations and ELL populations. In the 26 schools supported by Connections nationwide, on average 9.8% of students have IEPs. For those schools supported by Connections that are their own LEA, the percentage of students with disabilities can be as high as 18%, as it is at Commonwealth Connections Academy in Pennsylvania. It is anticipated that 12% of students at NCCA will be students with disabilities.

Although the school will be reaching students statewide who need another educational option, the teaching/learning center will be located in the Raleigh/Durham vicinity, a well-populated area with good transportation access for the staff. Through its research on virtual charter schools around the country, the Governing Board understands that on average approximately three percent of the total student population in a state may choose this option. To increase accessibility to this school to those students who may need it, and because it is anticipated that there will be a low number of students from any one LEA who choose to enroll, the Governing Board has chosen to serve students statewide.

- 2. What will be the total projected enrollment at the charter school and what percentage of the Average Daily Membership (ADM) does that reflect when compared to the Local Education Agency (LEA) of the same offered grade levels? (i.e. If the proposed school will be grades 9-12, only compare the total enrollment to the total enrollment of the LEA is grades 9-12).*

NCCA anticipates enrolling approximately 1,000 students in Year 1; 1,500 students in Year 2; and 2,000 students in Year 3. The statewide ADM total for all LEAs for the 2012-2013 school year was 1,476,257 (<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/fbs/accounting/data>). Therefore, NCCA's project enrollment reflects 0.068% in Year 1, 0.100% in Year 2, and 0.170% in Year 3.

Community outreach efforts will be the main driver of increased enrollment. Public charter school experiences from other states indicate students and parents develop strong community bonds within a public charter school. Word-of-mouth interactions by parents to their family, friends, and neighbors

will likely increase enrollment, as well as outreach activities conducted by NCCA.

3. *Explain how the charter school's education plan will compare to or differ from that of the local LEA(s).*

North Carolina Virtual Public Schools (NCVPS), a state-operated supplemental virtual program in the state, augments a high school student's local program of study by offering courses that the student is unable to take at his or her local school. NCCA, by contrast, will offer a full-time virtual educational program, similar to local LEAs that offer state-aligned curriculum with North Carolina-certified teachers. NCCA will serve students in grades 6-12 who need more than supplemental courses and who require flexibility in the administration of their public school education on a full-time basis. NCCA's education plan will not only offer a full-time virtual program utilizing North Carolina-certified teachers and include clubs, activities, guidance counselors, and student support services, but will also include crafting a personalized learning plan for each student to reach his or her potential and graduate on time, prepared for college or career.

There is a strong demand for our school throughout North Carolina. Prior to any marketing or parental outreach efforts, over 4,200 families expressed interest in learning more about the program when available. In addition, 24 information sessions were held in October and November 2013 of which 18 were conducted online and 6 were in-person public events in North Carolina communities (Forsyth, Guilford, Durham, Wake, Union, and Mecklenburg counties). During each information session, parents, students, and community stakeholders were given an opportunity to ask questions about the proposed public charter school as well as learn more about the school's proposed curriculum, courses, student support services, and student activity clubs. More detail is provided in Appendix A.

4. *In the appendices (Appendix A), you must provide evidence through a narrative or visual of this educational need through survey data, or times and locations of public meetings discussing this proposed charter school. (Please do not provide more than one sample survey form).*
5. *Designate how this proposed virtual school model is a fit for North Carolina which has a strong NC Virtual Public School program already in existence. Specifically identify and describe the un-served or under-served needs that are currently missed by NCVPS.*

NCCA provides a full-time school experience which includes more than courses. Each student will have a progression plan focused on career and college readiness. Beginning in grade 9, guidance counselors work with each student individually on graduation plans with a focus on appropriate courses, credits, and post-secondary planning. Students at all grade levels also participate in clubs, activities, and electives to complete the full school experience. NCCA will reach students who need a flexible schedule and for whom a cutting-edge virtual approach provides the best pathway to successful completion of their educational program. NCCA will promote academic and emotional success for every learner through an individualized learning program combining the best in virtual education with real and engaging connections among students, families, teachers, and the community. The NCCA approach will provide students in grades 6-12 with the opportunity for enrollment in a public school outside of the traditional classroom on a full-time basis when the supplemental NCVPS program is not an option or will

not meet the needs of a particular student. NCCA is not a course program like NCVPS; it is a whole-school experience for students with academic, behavioral, emotional, and career supports found in public school and not offered by NCVPS.

NCCA will be a public charter school and as such, should receive funding using the methodology prescribed by North Carolina Code of Laws 115C-238.29H, which states in part:

"(a) The State Board of Education shall allocate to each charter school:
(1) An amount equal to the average per pupil allocation for average daily membership from the local school administrative unit allotments in which the charter school is located for each child attending the charter school except for the allocation for children with disabilities and for the allocation for children with limited English proficiency;
(2) An additional amount for each child attending the charter school who is a child with disabilities; and
(3) An additional amount for children with limited English proficiency attending the charter school, based on a formula adopted by the State Board."

The statute uses the word "shall" prior to the verb "allocate" and the text does not appear to give the State Board of Education flexibility to differentiate funding between the different instructional models used by public charter schools. The State Board of Education has adopted TCS-U-015, which states a virtual charter school will receive the same rate as a full-year course in the NCVPS without the benefit of local funds, for eight courses per student (estimated at \$3,500 per student per year). While this funding level is appropriate for students taking part-time virtual classes, it is not sustainable for a fiscally- and educationally-sound, full-time virtual school that is held to the same accountability standards as all other charter schools. Furthermore, this conflicts with the referenced state law.

Therefore, NCCA has built its application using a similar funding model to the brick-and-mortar charter schools. This will allow for a sustainable and fiscally- and educationally-responsible public charter school.

Purposes of the Proposed Charter School: *In one page or less, describe how the proposed charter school will achieve one or more of the six legislated purposes, as specifically addressed in the NC charter school statute GS 115C-238.29A, and the proposed school's operations.*

The Six Legislative Purposes of a Charter School are:

- 1. Create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunities to be responsible for the learning program at the school site.*
- 2. Hold schools accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results.*
- 3. Provide parents and students with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public school system.*
- 4. Improving student learning.*

5. *Increasing learning opportunities for all students, with a special emphasis on at-risk or gifted students.*
6. *Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods.*

While NCCA will achieve all six legislative purposes, it will uniquely specialize in three: providing parents and students with expanded public school choices, increasing learning opportunities for all students, and encouraging the use of different and innovative teaching methods.

3. NCCA will expand choices for educational opportunities for parents and students across North Carolina by offering a statewide full-time virtual program. In addition to a full-time program with high-quality curriculum for students in grades 6-12, NCCA will provide students who succeed the opportunity to continue from middle school to high school graduation without interruption, utilizing a consistent, personalized approach. NCCA will provide a quality education choice for students in remote, rural areas or for families who need a more flexible schedule or more personalized pathway for student success.

5. NCCA will increase learning opportunities for all students, especially those who are at risk, gifted, or need a specialized focus with lessons and resources personalized for their specific needs. NCCA will achieve this through the unique features of an online setting and our personalized approach to each student's education. Without the typical classroom constraints of space and schedules, students will be placed in the appropriate courses (e.g., foundational math, honors English) based on individual need. The personalized learning approach benefits both struggling students and high achievers. The placement process ensures that each learner is provided with the most appropriate curriculum, pacing, and teaching approach from day one. NCCA teachers will work closely with a student's Learning Coach (a parent or another caring adult designated by the parents) to ensure a steady flow of appropriate activities for students working below and/or above grade level. In a virtual environment, students are able to work below or above grade level without fear of ostracism or other negative social repercussions that students sometimes face in a more, traditional, site-based school setting.

6. NCCA's unique educational program encourages the use of different and innovative teaching methods by fusing learning in the classical tradition with innovations in technology. The virtual school program stimulates creativity in students by offering an environment that allows learning to transcend beyond the walls of a traditional public school. Some examples of innovative tools that promote student engagement and learning include synchronous LiveLesson (TM) sessions and interactive Teachlet (TM) tutorials. In LiveLesson sessions teachers share their screen, create break-out groups, and instruct using whiteboards, group chat, and more. In math, proprietary interactive web tools for instructions include a virtual pan balance, 2-D and 3-D shape program, geoboard, spring scale, digital scale, and work pad. In science, students use a virtual rocks and minerals kit developed with Johns Hopkins University, a chemical reactions program, and virtual dissections. Innovative tools for teaching language arts include the Connect-a-Majig (R), Reading Activity Tracker, and Guardians of Grammar Tool

game. Each NCCA student will have access to these powerful learning tools through Connexus (R), a proprietary Education Management System (EMS) (additional information provided in the section for Virtual Platform Delivery) developed as the technology backbone to aid teachers in delivering instruction and communicating with students and their families. NCCA teachers will use Connexus to carefully monitor each student's progress through the curriculum and to individualize the program to maximize each student's performance.

In addition to these three key areas, NCCA will encourage accountability and transparency through the ready reporting capabilities and data access within Connexus to carefully monitor each student's progress and to maximize each student's performance.

NCCA will be responsible for student scores on all required state assessments as mandated by North Carolina's NCLB flexibility waiver (approved May 29, 2012) and will ensure student achievement and maintain a high level of accountability.

The use of technology allows for individualized instruction and competency-based evaluation, thus improving the education process. Teachers will track student progress through Connexus, identifying problem areas quickly and allowing them to put a plan in place to correct learning deficiencies in a timely manner. In a virtual setting, students master skills at their own pace with guidance and support from full-time certified teachers. Learning is demonstrated through ongoing and meaningful assessments that drive learning for the individual student.

Goals for the Proposed Charter School:

- 1. Provide specific and measurable student achievement performance goals for the school's educational program and the method of demonstrating that students have attained the skills and knowledge specified for those goals. Address how often and when the information will be communicated to the governing board and other stakeholders. These goals should include specific and measurable performance objectives over the first five years of the schools existence.*

NCCA will establish ambitious but achievable student learning outcomes and goals.

1. NCCA will test at least 95% of students during any academic year for purposes of the state's accountability system.

2. The school's percentage of students in grade 12 who graduate will be within 10% of the statewide average in Years 1-5. In Year 5, the school's graduation rate will meet or exceed the statewide average.

3. NCCA will request a waiver of TCS-U-015(8)(c). A 15% withdrawal rate is an unrealistic expectation in the first year of operation for a full-time virtual school. Over time, this mandate will become more manageable for NCCA. The Governing Board is willing to commit to no more than a 30% withdrawal rate in each of the first three years of operation.

4. As a public charter school, NCCA is requesting state and local funds pursuant to 115C-238.29H, as well as all eligible federal funds. With this

level of funding, NCCA's student-to-teacher ratio will not exceed 30:1.

5. NCCA will meet the Annual Measurable Objectives for students who are proficient in math or reading as defined by North Carolina's ESEA flexibility waiver request.

6. At least 85% of full academic year students will achieve a measurable learning gain in reading during the school year as measured by pre- and post-tests.

7. At least 80% of full academic year students will achieve a measurable learning gain in mathematics during the school year as measured by pre- and post-tests.

NCCA will adhere to the same accountability measures, administer the same state assessments, and follow the same proficiency measures as all public charter schools in North Carolina, in addition to using its own internal assessment tools. NCCA's assessments, combined with quality curriculum and instruction, will improve student achievement and maintain a high level of accountability. The Principal will inform the Governing Board and other stakeholders of the school's progress in meeting these goals on a regular and timely monthly basis.

Per TCS-U-013 (<http://sbepolicy.dpi.state.nc.us/policies/TCS-U-013.asp?pri=04&cat=U&pol=013&acr=TCS>), "All new charter schools receiving a preliminary charter must participate in a year-long planning program which includes the application process beginning in February of the previous year, prior to the charter school's opening for students." The Governing Board recognizes and supports the timeline and planning year process. Upon charter approval, we will convene frequently to ensure the proper development of NCCA's curricular, financial, marketing, and facility plans. We will work with the Office of Charter Schools on planning, staff development, finance, governance, board training, marketing, policies and procedures, and securing a school site. We acknowledge that final approval of the charter is contingent upon successfully completing all of the requirements of the planning program.

2. How will the governing board know that the proposed public charter school is working toward attaining their mission statement?

The mission of NCCA is to provide every student a personalized education to help him/her achieve his/her full potential.

Student academic success will be monitored and evaluated by all stakeholders: parents, teachers, students, administrators, and the Governing Board. Strong accountability metrics and a high-quality curriculum will ensure the North Carolina Essential State Standards are implemented with fidelity. Comprehensive but appropriate data collection and analysis will be used to design and implement student supports and interventions. NCCA will use Connexus, described in the Section for Virtual Platform Delivery, to collect and analyze data. To increase transparency and accountability, the school's performance will be measured and communicated to parents and reported monthly by the Governing Board.

Additionally, the Governing Board will be responsible for ensuring that all

aspects of the financial and programmatic accountability systems meet the obligations to the Office of Charter Schools, Department of Public Instruction, and the State Board of Education. Plans for monitoring and reporting on the effectiveness of curriculum, instructional methods, and practices include:

* Student learning: The Governing Board will hold the school faculty, staff, and its support partner accountable for student learning. Examples of student learning outcomes include measurable learning gains, performance on the state standardized tests, and meeting or exceeding North Carolina's Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO).

* Stakeholder feedback: The Governing Board will take into account and hold the school responsible for implementing constructive and actionable stakeholder feedback, including feedback received from parents and students via StarTrack. This integrated rating system allows every student (along with every teacher and Learning Coach) to rate each lesson from one star (low) to five stars (high) and give comments. Ratings are used by curriculum staff to identify areas of strength, as measured by student learning outcomes, as well as areas in need of improvement. This same tool is also used to measure the school's success. The StarTrack system will be fully embraced by students, teachers, and the school's leadership as a dynamic means to provide real-time feedback on the quality of the curriculum and the school.

* Parent satisfaction: The Governing Board is focused on parent satisfaction. Parents enroll students in virtual schools for a variety of reasons. NCCA will measure parental satisfaction and use the data to improve the school. NCCA families will be given an annual opportunity to participate in a thorough parent satisfaction survey, conducted by an independent market research firm and overseen by the Governing Board. The school will aim for at least 90% of families to agree that the curriculum is high quality and that they are satisfied with the educational program and instruction.

* School growth: NCCA has a responsible plan for school growth (balancing the desire to serve as many students as possible each academic year with growing the school) that positions both the students and NCCA for future success. The school hopes to responsibly grow from 1,000 students (Year 1) to up to 2,000 (Year 3) through a combination of parent outreach, high student retention rates, and word-of-mouth recommendations and referrals by current NCCA families.

* Compliance with state and federal laws: The Governing Board will ensure the school is compliant with all applicable state and federal laws regarding public education and specifically charter schools, including the Charter Schools Act, NCGS 115C-238.29D(b) and State Board of Education (SBE) policies. This compliance will include the timely and accurate reporting of required state data.

* Fiscal accountability: The Governing Board is fully committed to fiscal accountability, including cost control, responsible growth, and regular audits.

III. EDUCATION PLAN

(No more than ten total pages in this section)

NOTE: *All sections of the Education Plan should align with all other sections of this application. The State Board of Education shall give priority consideration to the applicants who demonstrate potential for significant, meaningful innovation in education. Provide precise and clear explanations. Lack of response to any question or proper documentation will deem the application incomplete.*

Instructional Program:

Provide a detailed description of the overall instructional program of the proposed charter school, including major instructional methods, assessment strategies, and explain how this instructional program and model meet the needs of the targeted student population.

These definitions describe the unique terminology and major instructional methods and assessment strategies of NCCA.

* Alerts: The teacher homepage includes a column that reflects data to help teachers recognize the level of support each student may need. It will display one or more letters if there are factors that may impact a student's success.

* Assessment Objective Performance Reports (AOPR): It provides measures of real-time student performance on each of the essential skills and standards based upon individual assessment items.

* Curriculum Based Assessments: The program uses curriculum-based assessments (CBAs) as an effective way to gather additional information on students' understanding of concepts. Diagnostic curriculum-based assessments (DCBAs) pinpoint strengths and weaknesses in student mastery of concepts, and verification curriculum-based assessments (VCBAs) gauge authentic student learning of concepts previously graded as successfully completed with scores of B or higher.

* Intervention Indicators: Intervention Indicators are displayed on the Teacher Home Page to facilitate teachers' ability to identify which of their students may be in need of an instructional intervention in math (M), reading (R), or both. These indicators are data-driven codes and are the first phase of a multi-phase initiative to facilitate teachers' abilities to ensure that all students learn at high levels of achievement. These codes are used to identify at-risk students, determine and implement appropriate instructional interventions, and monitor the effectiveness of interventions.

* Longitudinal Evaluation of Academic Progress (LEAP): Students in grades 6-8 take the LEAP, a technology-facilitated pre-, mid-, and post-test. LEAP provides essential diagnostic information for developing and planning instruction.

* Learning Coach: A parent, extended family member, or similarly qualified adult designated by the parent/guardian as a Learning Coach with the student to support the instruction delivered by a certified teacher.

* LiveLesson (R) Session: A real-time web conferencing tool, LiveLesson sessions allow teachers to work synchronously with individuals or groups of students, using voice-over IP, chat, electronic whiteboard, and shared web surfing based on Adobe (R) Connect (TM).

* Multi-tiered Intervention: NCCA will employ a multi-tiered intervention model so every student has access to the resources they need to be successful: Tier 1-Core Instructional Program; Tier 2-Supplemental Programs and Supports; Tier 3-Alternative Programs. The Student Support and IEP Teams

will meet regularly to develop an intervention plan and strategies for improvement for struggling students.

* Personalized Performance Learning (TM) (PPL): This instructional process creates a unique learning experience for each student.

* Progression Plan: Teachers and counselors use four-year academic progression plans for students to ensure they are on target for graduation and for meeting their college and career goals. A Progression Plan, automated in Connexus, defines and tracks requirements that must be accomplished to meet a goal.

* SSTAIR (TM): The Skills, Standards, Assessment, Intervention, and Response (SSTAIR) instructional model deeply links our curriculum, standards, assessments, and interventions that directly impact student mastery and resulting standardized test performance.

* Student Status/Escalation Process: NCCA will track and report ongoing student progress based on the objective numeric data generated by Connexus. NCCA will analyze attendance, participation, performance, assessment submissions, and teacher contact.

* Teachlet Tutorials: Teachlet tutorials (proprietary, interactive, asynchronous graphic/video/audio tutorials) are incorporated into most lessons and provide students a dynamic, fun, and engaging way to learn the concepts they need to complete the lesson.

Virtual Platform Delivery:

1. *Describe the portal or learning management system and how it works. Include information on how much synchronous teacher interaction students will receive for instruction. What other types of direct, real time contact will students receive from instructional and/or administrative staff of the virtual charter school?*

The school anticipates engaging Connections Academy of North Carolina, LLC (a wholly-owned subsidiary of Connections) for curriculum, technology, and other services in compliance with North Carolina statute. As part of this engagement, Connections will provide Connexus, a combination of a learning management system, student information system, and communication tool. Connexus creates a rich, vibrant virtual classroom experience that allows parents, teachers, and students to work together in a supportive environment. The comprehensive, reliable, and user-friendly system is designed to guide students through a rigorous curriculum in a way that also meets their individual learning needs. Students and parents are able to access the school 24/7/365 from any Internet connection. Connexus allows teachers, students, and parents to:

- * View schedules
- * Access all lessons assignments
- * Monitor progress in real-time through a grade book
- * Receive alerts through secure WebMail
- * Communicate with teachers and other students and families via message boards
- * Provide ratings and written feedback about specific lessons

Connexus is the platform for facilitating the educational environment. This proprietary, web-based software delivers every assignment and tracks every activity (whether conducted online or offline), while monitoring the mastery of discrete skills and knowledge. Connexus operates within a secure infrastructure, protecting data from loss and intrusion while maintaining a safe environment.

Connexus is fully customizable to meet district and state reporting needs in the form best suited for integration with existing information systems. It captures all needed data about students, their attendance, and their performance. This data will be used for formal reporting to various stakeholders on the students'- and the school's- instructional progress.

Depending on the need of the learner, teacher contact- via telephone, LiveLesson session, and WebMail- with the student varies and may be as frequent as several times a day (via Webmail and telephone) and at least once a week for each of the core courses via a scheduled LiveLesson session.

Teachers do not wait to be contacted: they are proactive participants in their students' learning plans. In addition, families are always welcome to visit the teaching/learning center during business hours to meet with their teachers in person.

LiveLesson sessions allow teachers and students to interact synchronously with one another in real time in a virtual classroom. Teachers will use LiveLesson sessions regularly to convene groups of students together to focus on particular learning topics, and may also use LiveLesson sessions for independent student work groups to collaborate on activities via chat, electronic whiteboard, and shared web surfing. Threaded discussions on course-based message boards will also be used as appropriate by grade level to provide important opportunities for collaboration and interaction amongst students.

Students, teachers, and staff also interact asynchronously via WebMail. This email system is securely located within Connexus. Students, Learning Coaches, and teachers use it to communicate with each other, protecting them from spam, contact from strangers, and other mainstream email issues.

Real connections will be an important component at NCCA. Students will have the opportunity to participate in both face-to-face and virtual community activities. Face-to-face activities will include state assessments, regular field trips and outings facilitated by the staff and Community Coordinators, parent volunteers whom the school will support in organizing such activities for families who live nearby.

2. Explain how the virtual charter school will ensure hands-on laboratory and physical/kinesthetic experiences as part of the students' education.

Students will engage in hands-on experiences as part of their day-to-day instructional experiences. Students will receive a collection of physical materials, and supplies (e.g., hand lens, magnet, safety goggles, thermometers), as well as use common household objects (coins, flashlight, measuring tape, sugar, salt), to supplement and enrich the learning experience.

We will also research options to partner with a local organization such as the Museum of Life + Science in Durham, the Discovery Place in Charlotte, and the Morehead Planetarium and Science Center to provide the hands-on laboratory experience. Through Morehead Planetarium and Science Center's DESTINY (Delivering Edge-cutting Science Technology and Internet across North Carolina for Years to come) Traveling Science Learning Program, we will bring effective science learning to students and provide support for teachers.

Field Trips: Each year, students, teachers, and parents will take learning on the road with a variety of school-sponsored optional trips to museums, farms, science centers, or the Great Smokies. Some examples might include:

- * Hightouch Hightech - Science Made Fun! (Wake County)
- * Mint Hill Country Doctor's Museum and Country Store (Mecklenburg County)
- * International Civil Rights Center and Museum (Guilford County)

Clubs and activities include the National Honor Society, academic clubs, chess club, robotics club, volunteer and service clubs, and literary and arts club.

In addition, proprietary multimedia curriculum tools and resources are incorporated into students' lessons to actively engage students in learning and support their mastery of key skills and concepts. Interactive tools include:

* Lab Investigator - Rocks and Minerals: Offering a hands-on forensics style of learning, this tool lets students perform experiments on rocks and minerals in a high-tech, interactive virtual learning environment.

* Lab Investigator - Chemical Reactions: High School students engage with an interactive periodic table, build and balance chemical equations, watch videos of chemical reactions in an actual lab setting by certified chemists, and record observations for their teacher.

* Lab Investigator - Virtual Dissection: Students increase their understanding of anatomy and traits of different organisms as they view videos, research specimen, and create lab reports.

* Virtual Spring Scale: Simulating an actual scale, students measure the force in Newtons of a set of items. Students hang objects from the spring scale and use the spring scale to drag objects across a flat surface or up a ramp at various degrees.

* Virtual Digital Scale: Students engage in measurement as they select containers such as flasks, beakers, and weighing paper; zero the weight; add materials to measure; and mix and match various containers and materials.

* Virtual Pan Balance: Students learn metric and customary units as they engage with an interactive tool to measure, compare, order, and convert.

* Virtual Geoboard: Through this online tool, simulating a traditional

pegboard and rubber band geoboard, students engage in hands-on methods of determining perimeter and area, plus visualizing division by grouping.

3. *Enrollment:*

- a. *Define attendance at the virtual charter school. Describe how this will be regularly collected and examined by administrative staff to track student progress.*

Students in a virtual school program will not have physical classrooms to go to but still must meet all regulatory requirements for attending public schools. These requirements, including the required 185 days of instruction or 1,025 hours of instruction, will be documented in the School Handbook (which will be finalized and approved by the Governing Board). Learning Coaches ensure that students meet their school's attendance requirements and that the student's attendance is properly documented as required by NCCA. School authorities will be responsible for enforcing attendance laws, and students not attending school as mandated by law will be considered truant. The school's teaching/learning center will serve as its attendance office.

Although there is more flexibility than in a traditional school regarding when instruction occurs and what constitutes attendance in a virtual setting, students will be expected to follow the school calendar and attendance requirements. Specific school calendars and the required days and hours of instruction will be posted in the School Handbook. All students must complete assigned lessons, submit specified assessments, and record attendance hours. Students and/or their Learning Coaches must also participate in/respond to telephone calls, WebMail messages, and/or web conferencing (LiveLesson sessions) contacts, as well as in-person contacts (if required) with a teacher during the school's regularly scheduled school hours.

NCCA will equate attendance with actual work completion. NCCA will not accept logging on, or the submission of a Learning Coach's record of hours worked, as sufficient proof that attendance has occurred. NCCA will contact a Learning Coach for truancy violations in situations where student attendance cannot be confirmed as documented by their work product. Work product will be considered part of attendance, which is a unique characteristic of online education.

Teachers will also verify attendance records on a regular basis and may change an attendance status if there is insufficient evidence to verify attendance, and/or if they are unable to determine if a student was participating in learning. In reviewing attendance documentation, teachers must determine that each student has met or exceeded the required amount of instructional time stipulated by North Carolina's regulations.

- b. *Portray the proposed student enrollment over the first three years of operation. Explain how those figures were collected and from where the applicant believes they will draw the largest number of students.*

NCCA anticipates enrolling 1,000 students in Year 1; 1,500 students in Year 2; and 2,000 students in Year 3. We anticipate students from every county to enroll, with the number of students from each county aligning with state population, resulting in a plurality of our students being residents of

Mecklenburg, Guilford, and Wake Counties, and as such have used them as examples throughout this application. Please see the Projected Enrollment Table in Section IV. The online charter application required by the Office of Charter Schools did not permit NCCA to select more than three LEAs for the application; therefore, the application is based upon these three LEAs. Additional information has been provided in Appendix T regarding the additional LEAs.

It is also anticipated that 50-60% of the students will come from the traditional classroom, approximately 20% from homeschooling, and the rest from private schools or students new to school in North Carolina (students moved from another state). Students whose instructional needs will be effectively met by NCCA include: students who are in rural communities and have limited public school options; students who are far ahead of or far behind their peers in school, including students at risk of academic failure and those coping with social issues who may particularly benefit from personalized, full-time virtual instruction; students pursuing artistic or athletic careers or career development opportunities requiring a flexible schedule; students who are homebound due to illness or disability; and students with special learning needs.

- c. *Discuss the problem of student turnover in virtual charter schools. What strategies will be utilized to ensure this acceptable rate will not be surpassed? Provide information on how these procedures will be clearly implemented before and during operation of the virtual charter school.*

Nationally, schools supported by Connections have on average a 25% withdrawal rate, similar to other online schools. Students who attend a virtual charter school typically do so for a variety of reasons, including short term solutions to problems (e.g., illness). Virtual schools are not the right fit for all students. Families who are new to this educational model may not fully understand it until they are actively participating, regardless of initial outreach. In most states, including North Carolina, the enrollment process mandates that virtual schools accept all students regardless of the appropriateness for a particular student or family.

In some cases, students enroll in a virtual school as a last option prior to dropping out of school. The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) recently conducted a study of online schools in that state and found "...greater percentage of students are seeking an online school as their last option before dropping out, In 2010-2011, 59% of online dropouts had transferred from another Colorado district or school within months of dropping out. Conversely, of dropouts statewide, 34% transferred from another district or school within months of dropping out" (http://www.cde.state.co.us/onlinelearning/download/OL_Research_Final.pdf). NCCA anticipates the student turnover rate will be less than 30%.

For those students for whom it is appropriate, virtual schools serve them well. The CDE study also found that, "More than half of incoming 9th grade online students are enrolling in an online school for the first time. Of incoming 9th graders who were in online schools previously, fewer than 10% had been enrolled in an online school for four years or more. However, this small percentage of students who remained enrolled in an online school for four years or more performed comparably to and sometimes better, on average,

than all 9th graders statewide. This finding demonstrates that online schools are a good option for some students, in particular those who remain enrolled in an online school for multiple years."

NCCA will engage families early in the enrollment process to ensure that they understand the responsibilities of working in the online environment and that they have selected the right educational option. Information sessions will be held across the state well before NCCA begins the initial enrollment process. Already, 24 information sessions for interested parents, community leaders, and stakeholders were held in October and November 2013.

After a student's initial enrollment application is complete, the academic placement team will communicate with families and students on the appropriate coursework and document these discussions and decisions in appropriate logs. Students and families will participate in orientation and onboarding activities to support their successful transition to an online learning environment and NCCA. Teachers, students, and Learning Coaches will engage in ongoing monitoring of and early intervention in student learning and achievement through the implementation of the SSTAIR instructional model, the Personalized Performance Learning (PPL) program, teacher/student/family contacts, and an escalation system.

- d. *Offer assurances that the proposed virtual school will identify, address, and resolve attendance issues so that this school will not be overfunded. Include descriptions of the proposed virtual school's absentee or truancy policy as well as policies for withdrawing students.*

NCCA will identify, address, and resolve attendance issues so that it will not be overfunded. An escalation plan for truancy will be implemented for students who fail to meet legal attendance requirements, including reported attendance, required contact with teachers, submission of assessments, and documentation of lesson completion, and the school will institute truancy proceedings, or otherwise report the student to the appropriate authorities, as is consistent with state law.

NCCA recognizes the school may serve students for a "period of time" and enrollment numbers may frequently change. Withdrawals and additions to enrollment may change class rosters and attendance logs. NCCA will draw upon the experience of our proposed support partner, Connections, in this area to ensure data, enrollment, and attendance will be accurately reported and in a timely manner.

Students may withdraw from NCCA at any time in accordance with state statute, provided that the Learning Coach provides either evidence of homeschool registration consistent with state requirements or the name and location of another public or private school that the student will attend. Prior to withdrawing, the school will encourage the Learning Coach and/or student to discuss with the school staff the reason(s) for withdrawing as it may be possible to address issues so the student does not need to withdraw. This data will be recorded and reviewed by the Principal so school leadership can continually reflect on the school's ability to serve its families and students.

If a student becomes ineligible or leaves the charter school, NCCA will ensure all appropriate paperwork is submitted and/or forwarded to the new

school. Schools will pursue truancy violations in situations where the student can't be confirmed as attending as documented by their work product. NCCA will follow the compulsory attendance policy in GS-115C-378 (http://www.ncleg.net/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/HTML/BySection/Chapter_115C/GS_115C-378.html).

NCCA's proposed support partner is very familiar with, and has performed successfully on, state-initiated audits. In Ohio, for instance, the school supported by Connections is required to enter data concerning the enrollment and attendance of students into the School Options Enrollment System (SOES), used by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) to make payments to schools. ODE Area Coordinators regularly conduct full-time enrollment (FTE) reviews to verify the accuracy of the enrollment and attendance data entered by the school into SOES. NCCA would be open to a similar process in North Carolina.

4. Education:

- a. *Describe how the school will ensure that teachers are planning instruction, assessing learning, and reporting outcomes to parents and administrators.*

Instruction and assessment efforts will begin with a thorough student placement process and progress review, including online and offline placement tests, which help to customize the student's academic program and formulate the Personalized Learning Plan (PLP), a written plan for all members of the learning team to follow. The personalization process includes: initial academic placement and course selection, ongoing performance testing, interest inventories, review of student work samples, detailed phone conferences, goal-setting, adjustment of student schedules, lesson pacing, instructional activities, instructional interventions, enrollment in elective courses, and strategies for families to implement.

Teachers will use a combination of synchronous LiveLesson sessions and asynchronous instructional tools and resources to teach students. As in the traditional classroom, NCCA teachers will plan lessons, instruct (via LiveLesson session), assess student learning, and provide feedback in real time. Daily instructional activities include demonstrating principles, answering questions, modifying and differentiating learning activities based on student performance and needs, and providing opportunities for student interaction. NCCA will use the Skills, Standards, Assessment, Intervention, and Response (SSTAIR) method as its instructional model, which relies on student assessment data for continuous monitoring of student progress. Beginning with the North Carolina Essential State Standards and Common Core State Standards, teachers will be able to easily see what students should be able to do by the end of a specific grade in each of the core area subjects. The PLP tool will place at each teacher's fingertips all of the assessment data available for students, e.g. state test scores, LEAP pre-, mid-, and post-test assessment data, participation and performance metrics, and any IEP information. An automatically updated grade book allows parents and students to see grades and course completion progress at any time.

Intervention Indicators will be displayed to facilitate a teacher's identification of students who may be in need of intervention in math, reading, or both. In addition, at both the section and individual student levels, the Assessment Objective Performance Report (AOPR) can be generated displaying not only the essential skills and standards for a course, but

also exactly where in the curriculum each of these is assessed. Teachers can run this report as frequently as they like to see exactly how students are progressing with regard to each of the skills and standards for that subject and grade.

The SSTAIR instruction method:

- * Enhances the multi-tiered instruction model
- * Identifies essential skills and standards by subject/grade level
- * Identifies how and where these essential skills and standards are assessed within the program
- * Provides a Response to Intervention model
- * Provides access to and analysis of real-time data to determine mastery/proficiency
- * Incorporates data-driven decisions throughout instruction

NCCA will utilize ongoing online and offline assessments to measure student progress and a technology-based assessment tool to measure student gains over the school year. The Connections' developed LEAP test (Longitudinal Evaluation of Academic Progress (R)) for students in grades 6-8 provides essential diagnostic information for developing the PLP and planning instruction. Administered at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year, it provides an early read on performance on state-mandated tests, and reports key accountability data on progress throughout the academic year. The school will use Scantron for students in grades 9-11 for pre-, mid-, and post-testing.

- b. Define the administrative evaluation protocol for each staff member. Include information about when the staff will be informed of the evaluation instrument to be used and how the administration will utilize this tool to supervise staff.*

Teachers will implement the Core Standards for Facilitating Student Learning (the essential values, vision, and protocols through which teachers and school leaders work together) and will participate in a performance evaluation system aligned to the teaching standards, school goals, and student performance. Through ongoing teacher training and professional development, participation in professional learning communities, peer review, and a vibrant career ladder, teachers will be effective and consistently focused on continuous improvement and student learning. Instructional leaders, using data from Connexus, will drive professional development for individual teachers and the whole school.

The Core Standards for Facilitating Student Learning, as listed herein, support the mission of NCCA:

- * Provide high quality instruction resulting in student learning
- * Personalize student programs

- * Monitor student performance and provide timely feedback and intervention
- * Monitor student participation
- * Communicate frequently
- * Document and review all interactions
- * Collaborate and develop professionally

NCCA will implement Connections' Performance Evaluation System to create a high performance school by encouraging employees to put forth their best effort, focusing all employees on the school's main goals, rewarding and retaining employees based on outcomes/results, and providing continuous feedback for employee development. The system is integrated with Connexus and provides detailed data in designing goals and determining performance metrics in relationship to student performance. The Governing Board will review the Performance Evaluation System, make modifications, and approve for use at the school. NCCA staff will learn about the evaluation system as part of their orientation course at the beginning of each school year.

At the Governing Board's direction, a mid-year review of the school leader will be completed in December or January, and a formal end-of-year review in May or June. Staff will receive both mid- and end-of-year reviews by the school leader. Periodic feedback will be given both formally and informally throughout the school year. All educators and school administrators will be evaluated based on a combination of competencies and goals. Competencies and goals will be reviewed with staff at the beginning of the school year, and will be available for viewing and comment throughout the year.

The outcome of an individual's evaluation will affect future decisions regarding staff retention, promotional opportunities, or disciplinary action and termination decisions. An employee with at least one area needing improvement will be placed on an individualized Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) and given opportunities for professional development.

- c. Share the process for providing frequent, ongoing monitoring of an individual student's program that will be used to verify each student is participating in the virtual system.*

Teachers and administrators will continuously monitor student work via Connexus while implementing the SSTAIR instructional model, which relies on student assessment data for continuous monitoring of student progress. This systematic approach ensures that all students receive the necessary level of support throughout the learning process.

Both Learning Coaches and teachers will have access to the electronic grade book that tracks all results and serves as the basis of changes in the student's learning plan. Traditional report cards are not issued since the grade book allows immediate, up-to-the-minute review of progress at any time during the school year. A key aspect to assessments is the detailed feedback provided by the teachers beyond the simple right/wrong grading of many traditional assessment vehicles. NCCA will use a variety of advanced data visualization tools that provide students, parents, teachers, school administrators, institutional education partners, regulators, and

researchers with views of how students are performing.

In addition to formal graded assignments, teachers will continually monitor student work via Connexus, noting performance on computer-graded quizzes and checks for understanding and reaching out to students via synchronous telephone or LiveLesson sessions to verify student work and/or diagnose difficulties in mastering discrete skills and concepts. Connexus tracks teacher response time and teacher-student/teacher-parent communications, providing the school Principal with rich, actionable data on this key aspect of teacher performance.

Students will engage in several formative assessments that tap into all levels of student learning such as: scored daily assignments, daily checks for understanding requiring students to apply and integrate new skills in a thoughtful manner, and regular online quizzes and tests to measure understanding of newly presented material.

Throughout each logical unit of study, students are required to complete a series of offline and online assessments. Offline assessments include written compositions, science lab reports, short-answer questions and essays, book responses, and a variety of work samples. These assessments require direct teacher evaluation. Online assessments include quizzes and a unit test. While the quizzes are brief and frequent (occurring after every third or fourth lesson), the unit tests are more comprehensive and occur at the end of an entire unit. Online assessments provide students and families with immediate objective feedback, while offline assessments provide valuable reflection, feedback, and expertise from certified teachers. Students' grades will include a combination of quizzes, tests, work samples, and teacher feedback.

NCCA will use curriculum-based assessments (CBA) as a quick and effective way to gather, through telephone conversation, additional information on students' understanding of concepts. Diagnostic curriculum-based assessment (DCBA) pinpoint strengths and weaknesses in student mastery of concepts. Verification curriculum-based (VCBA) gauge authentic student learning of concepts previously graded as successfully completed with scores of B or higher.

If possible, state standardized test results will be integrated into an incoming student's basic information in Connexus. Likewise, results for state standardized tests, which are proctored face-to-face at a physical location, will be included in Connexus, along with internal pre-, mid-, and post-test data. This data will be used to track student progress from year to year and within the year, and to inform course placement and instructional needs of students.

d. Provide the intervention procedures utilized when students begin to struggle on assessments or fail to provide relevant work production.

Teachers will utilize a multi-tiered intervention approach to curriculum and instruction, which ensures that individual students receive the support they need. Students who may not be successful in the standard program Tier 1 (core instructional program) receive additional support via the supplemental and alternative programs in Tier 2 (supplemental instructional program) and

Tier 3 (alternative program). Teachers will monitor students' responses to interventions and adjust the type and intensity of support as needed.

NCCA will form a Student Support Team (SST) and an Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team to focus collaboratively on the needs of students who are struggling, and facilitate tutoring and other supports using this multi-tiered approach. Supports might include an increase in LiveLesson session participation, enrollment in instructional support programs, or other review or remediation programs such as Program for All Children to Excel (PACE (TM)), an intervention program focusing on building proficiency in reading and math skills. Teachers will be trained extensively in identifying students who need interventions and how to utilize the interventions.

This process is aided by Connexus, which uses data to help identify students' intervention needs. A teacher's Home Page shows, for each student, an icon indicating if interventions have been identified and if they have been assigned. The teacher can use his or her professional judgment to override these indicators and log the decision and rationale with Connexus. Also, the school's Student Support Team (SST) will implement an on-going process of identifying student intervention needs; assigning those interventions; tracking their success; and escalating, if necessary, from Tier 1 to Tier 2 to ultimately Tier 3 (alternative placement, most of which involves an IEP). The teacher homepage includes a column that reflects data to help teachers recognize the level of support each student may need. This column will display one or more letters if there are factors that may impact a student's success:

- * F - Free and Reduced Meal (FARM) eligible
- * L - Late enrolling student
- * E - Educational level of the Caretaker/Learning Coach
- * R - Reason the student is attending
- * G - Grade level does not align

Teachers and administrators continually monitor student work via Connexus while implementing the Skills, Standards, Assessment, Intervention, and Response (SSTAIR) instructional model, which relies on student assessment data. This systematic approach ensures all students receive the necessary level of support throughout the learning process.

Beginning with the North Carolina Essential State Standards, teachers will be able to easily see what students should be able to do by the end of a specific grade in each of the core area subjects. The PLP tool and teacher homepage place at each teacher's fingertips all assessment data available for students, e.g., state test scores, LEAP pre-, mid-, and post-test assessment data, participation and performance metrics, and any IEP information.

In a virtual environment, students working below grade level will be shielded from the negative social attention that struggling students often face in a brick-and-mortar environment and will be able to concentrate on

intensive learning.

- e. *Discuss how the proposed school plans to implement the statewide testing requirements that include online as well as paper and pencil tests. Particularly, assurances must be provided that the school will comply with the 95% rule.*

The Governing Board is dedicated to meeting and exceeding all of North Carolina's goals and grade level requirements. NCCA will participate and follow the North Carolina Testing Program. At in-person, proctored locations, students will participate in proficiency tests, eventually all of which will be online, depending upon grade level in addition to other statewide assessments, as required. Students will participate in all required assessments including:

- * Students in grades 6 and 7 take end-of-grade (EOG) tests in English language arts and mathematics during the last 15 days of the school year.
- * Students in grade 8 take EOG tests in English language arts, mathematics, and science during the last 15 days of the school year.
- * Students at grade 8 take EXPLORE exam.
- * Alternate assessments are available for many of the state tests for students with disabilities who have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).
- * All students identified as limited English proficient must be annually assessed to determine progress and level of English language proficiency
- * Students enrolled for credit in courses where end-of-course (EOC) tests are required must take the appropriate end-of-course test. These courses are Algebra I, English II, and Biology. EOC tests are given during the last 15 days of the instructional period for 4x4/semester courses or the last 20 days of the instructional period for traditional yearlong courses.
- * Students at grade 10 take the PLAN in October.
- * Students at grade 11 take the ACT in March.
- * Students at grade 12 who are identified as Career and Technical Education concentrators are required to take the WorkKeys assessments.

Results of these assessments will be reported through the Department of Public Instruction as well as communicated directly to parents. The Governing Board and school leadership will also include the results of the state mandated testing in the evaluation of the school's overall performance and its reports to the Department of Public Instruction. NCCA assures that 95% of students enrolled in each EOG or EOC assessments will complete the assessment for that course in a testing environment that follows the Testing Code of Ethics Guidelines.

- f. *Explain the processes used by the school to regularly update its content offerings.*

The instructional program and curriculum proposed for NCCA will regularly

undergo specific audit and revision. The curriculum will be updated regularly, with Governing Board approval, based on a rigorous analysis of student performance in relation to the North Carolina Essential State Standards and Common Core State Standards as measured by state testing results and internal assessments. The curriculum will be regularly evaluated, upgraded, and enhanced based on the needs of the school and students.

Teacher Course Liaisons, who are experts in their curricular areas, gather feedback from other teachers across all schools supported by Connections, and recommend updates and revisions to the curriculum based on this teacher input.

Input will be gathered on an ongoing basis via the StarTrack mechanism for lesson feedback. On virtually every lesson in their curriculum, and on the home page for each Learning Coach, is a StarTrack box inviting ratings on a five-star scale and an opportunity to provide text feedback. The ratings and feedback will be analyzed and used by the school to drive improvements.

The school's support partner, Connections, utilizes ADDIE, a five-phase instructional design model consisting of Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation, in the development of its curricular offerings. Each step has an outcome that feeds into the next step in the sequence.

Analysis - During analysis, the curriculum team identifies the goals and objectives, the audience's needs, existing knowledge, and any other relevant characteristics. This step also considers the learning environment, any constraints, the delivery options, and the timeline for the project.

Design - During this systematic process of specifying learning objectives, detailed storyboards and prototypes are often made, and the look and feel, graphic design, user-interface, and content are determined.

Development - Production and actual creation of the content and learning materials based on the Design phase occurs.

Implementation - During implementation, the plan is put into action and a procedure for training the learner and teacher is developed. Materials are delivered or distributed to the student group. After delivery, the effectiveness of the training materials is evaluated.

Evaluation - This phase consists of formative and summative evaluation. Formative evaluation is present in each stage of the ADDIE process. Summative evaluation consists of tests designed for criterion-related referenced items and providing opportunities for feedback from the users. Revisions are made as necessary.

Through its use of the Connections curriculum and instructional design, NCCA will be aligned with leading research and national standards on effective online course development and instruction. The research underscores the importance of integration of tools for student-to-teacher and student-to-student interaction and the central role of highly qualified, specially trained professional teachers (Smith, Rosina, Clark, Tom, and Blomeyer,

Robert, A Synthesis of New Research on K-12 Online Learning, Learning Point Associates/North Central Regional Educational Laboratory; Naperville, IL; 2005). In addition, the curriculum follows the National Standards for Quality Online Teaching, which focuses on teacher use of assessments, data, and ongoing communication to bring out the best in each unique online learner (The National Standards for Quality Online Teaching, International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL), http://www.inacol.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/iNACOL_TeachingStandardsv2.pdf, 2011). The proposed curriculum and instructional design accommodates the range of learning styles and is designed for individualized pacing, balanced with optimum interaction. The rigorous program includes both fundamental skills and higher-order thinking, which together prepare students for further education as well as lifelong, independent learning.

- g. List all equipment, services, training, or software that will be provided to all students (i.e. textbooks, internet connectivity, hardware/software, or storage devices). Also, specify what equipment each student or family is responsible to provide, and how the proposed school will assist those who cannot meet these access components.*

NCCA will provide the online and offline materials students need to succeed. A complete list of courses, materials, lessons, textbooks and supplies can be found at the following URLs:

- * <http://www.connectionsacademy.com/curriculum/middle-school/free-online-learning.asp>

- * <http://www.connectionsacademy.com/curriculum/high-school/free-online-learning.asp>

NCCA will ensure that access isn't an issue for students and families. NCCA will loan computers and subsidize Internet usage to students with demonstrated financial need. All NCCA-provided computers will be equipped with heightened Internet security settings and Internet filtering software that can be activated upon request. Families may choose to provide their own computer or laptop and/or Internet service. The Governing Board will seek competitive pricing for student technology and technology services. Contracting for equipment and services ensures that MCA and its students have the latest technology to experience the greatest benefit from the program. Technology for teachers and administrators will be provided through the contract with Connections.

The Governing Board made sure that the Connections program works on a variety of hardware and platforms found within educational institutions. Families may use their own equipment and software as long as they meet the minimum requirements, however NCCA will not be responsible for providing support for equipment or software not received through the school. In order to participate in the program, students need a desktop computer and monitor (or laptop), and a printer and Internet connection.

Connexus, the EMS that is central to the Connections program, can be accessed from different devices, such as a mobile phone or desktop computer. Connections tests Connexus features regularly to make sure they are working well on various devices and software.

Headsets with microphones are provided where two-way audio use is required by courses.

h. Share the availability of hardware or application support that will be made available to every student within the virtual charter school

Training sessions are available to help students and Learning Coaches learn how to use Connexus. Though Connexus is very easy to use, these sessions help users get the most benefit from the platform's many powerful features. Students and Learning Coaches can speak with a technology support representative at any time by calling a toll-free number during business hours. Representatives provide expert tech support, answer questions, and directly connect callers with other resources as needed. There is also a searchable Online Help system. If using their own computer, Connections' Technical Support will help students and parents configure Internet security settings and find additional Internet filtering software.

Each student will receive a license to access and use Connexus during the academic year for the purposes of utilizing the curriculum and services, including providing web-based access from non-school sites to the virtual school program by students, parents/guardians, Learning Coaches, teachers, and administrators. Access to other technologies is provided through Connexus, including the student information system (SIS), lesson scheduling tools, accountability tools, WebMail, instant messaging, secure chat, video and audio streaming, and message board forum.

In addition to the Connexus infrastructure, Connections technology staff members have an expansive knowledge of computer technology. They help Learning Coaches and students to troubleshoot any problems they are having with Connexus. The support team members also have remote diagnostic tools that allow them to "see" a student's computer and correct most problems from afar, including completely reimaging the computer back to the default configuration. In the event that the hardware needs to be replaced, the support staff can have a replacement sent to them.

Technical support is available through online Help (in Connexus) 24/7/365. Live phone support is available via Connections Support Services to parents, students, and staff, Monday to Friday 9:00 AM - 9:00 PM (Eastern Time). For students not using computer hardware and software provided by the school, NCCA will provide initial technical support to ensure they have the minimum requirements necessary to participate in the education program and ongoing technical support on an as-needed basis for their use of Connexus.

i. Describe the proposed virtual charter school's procedures to deliver instruction in the event of impaired equipment or loss of connectivity due to inclement weather conditions (i.e. hurricanes, ice storms).

Connexus has fault tolerance and redundancy built into it at every level. If any one component in Connexus fails, its load is immediately picked up by other components and service is not interrupted. The power system at the network operations center (NOC), where the Connexus technology components are housed, has redundant generators and Internet connections. Multiple systems monitor all components of Connexus, including hardware and software, 24/7/365. Alerts are sent immediately whenever an issue is detected- from a

bug in the software of a course to a server failure- and Connections' MIS and Development staff respond to every alert with immediate and appropriate action. Regular Connexus releases occur every two weeks and hotfixes when necessary can be applied any time. Operating system, firmware, and service patches are applied to all systems on an ongoing, scheduled basis with patches typically being applied to production systems after a testing period in other environments. From a user perspective, such as students, Learning Coaches, and teachers, should a power outage occur due to inclement weather, Connexus data and features will remain undamaged. The grade book, scheduler, course completion data, and other elements will continue to remain updated and will be available when the user re-gains power and logs back into the system.

NCCA will have an emergency plan to include the potential closing of the teaching/learning center due to weather or other emergencies. The school will notify families via WebMail and a banner on the home page of Connexus. In addition, school administrators will change the voicemail to indicate the closing in case someone attempts to call the school. Communication to the families will include a current status update and the expected duration of the closing and who to contact and how to contact them. Teachers will work from home in these instances so students are able to continue their lessons.

- j. Share the plans for shipping and handling of textbooks, supplies, and other educational tools to the enrolled students (as well as back to the vendor upon conclusion of the year or withdrawal by the parents).*

NCCA, partnering with Connections, will ship instructional materials, without additional cost to the families, including necessary hard copy textbooks, consumable print materials, Learning Coach support materials, and instructional supplies needed for a high-quality learning experience at home. Connections also supplies shipping materials with pre-paid labels to families for return shipping at the end of the year.

During the enrollment process, technology requests will be seamlessly processed to the Connections' fulfillment center, which coordinates and manages the orders and ships computers to students' homes. NCCA will arrange for physical non-consumable materials to be shipped back at the end of the year (or at the end of three years should the student have school technology). On behalf of the school, Connections will process all returns from students. They will work with families to coordinate the return, including arranging for pick up from students' homes. The Connections' Computer Setup Guide specifically addresses instructions for equipment returns for repair or withdrawal. It also advises the student, upon original receipt of the equipment, not to throw away any equipment boxes or packing materials so they may be used for a return or repair if necessary.

- 5. With virtual charter schools being new to North Carolina, describe the typical day for a charter school student and charter school teacher.*

Typical Student Day: The instructional time commitment required of students is comparable to that of a traditional school day. Since virtual school learners will not face the distractions and interruptions of a typical school setting- from lining up in the hallway to waiting out the teacher's handling of disruptive peers- students often use their learning time much

more efficiently. The in-depth application of concepts that is often relegated to homework in a conventional school setting will be an integral part of the learning day at NCCA; the application of discrete skills, extended projects, and remedial and enrichment activities will be part of the daily routine for students and their Learning Coaches. Activities vary based upon student needs, coursework, and personal schedules. Learning is integrated within individual activities as well as LiveLesson sessions and phone calls with teachers. Learning can occur when students learn best- not just between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.

In the morning of a typical student's day, the following activities might occur:

- * Learning Coach logs on, reads messages, and reviews lessons.
- * Student reads and responds to WebMail messages from teacher(s) about progress.
- * Student participates in math LiveLesson session with teacher and classmates.
- * Student completes a math lesson. Learning Coach monitors and facilitates learning.
- * Student completes a Language Arts lesson, including reading, writing, and discussing the lesson activities and text. Student completes a spelling lesson and takes a quiz online.

In the afternoon of a typical student day, the following activities might occur:

- * Student completes a science lesson and finishes reading a non-fiction reading selection.
- * Student does hands-on science experiment outside and begins a rough draft of science report.
- * Student completes art lesson and begins art project, and then participates in club/activity.
- * Learning Coach records attendance.
- * Student and Learning Coach review next day's schedule and make sure they are prepared.

Typical Teacher Day: The school day is not limited to certain hours for start and end times. However, the teaching staff will be available during the hours of operation, typically 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Teachers will work primarily from a teacher center. Teachers collaborate to share ideas, information, and teaching techniques with the families who are always welcome to visit.

In the morning of a typical teacher day, the following activities might occur:

- * Teacher logs on, reads messages, and reviews individual student attendance, participation, and performance.
- * Teacher sends a WebMail message to a student answering a question; teacher responds to Learning Coaches' questions/feedback.
- * Teacher conducts a science LiveLesson session with a group of students and notes who is struggling to follow up with those students after the lesson.
- * Teacher grades student portfolio assignments.
- * Teacher has a 1:1 session with a student who had questions on a lesson.
- * Teacher meets with other staff for a brown-bag professional development lunch to discuss the Assessment Performance Objective Report.

In the afternoon of a typical teacher day, the following activities might occur:

- * Teacher checks WebMail and grades assignments that have been submitted.
- * Teacher calls five students to conduct a Curriculum-Based Assessment (CBA).
- * Teacher confers with the principal.

Anna Marie is a recent graduate of a school supported by Connections. She is currently a freshman at the College of Mount St. Joseph in Cincinnati. To learn how attending a virtual high school helped prepare her for attending a brick-and-mortar university, please visit the following URL:

<http://www.connectionsacademy.com/online-high-school/student-life/student-videos/anna-marie-ridenour.aspx>

6-8 Curriculum and Instructional Design:

Describe the basic learning environment (e.g., classroom-based, independent study), including class size and structure.

The school will be staffed with an anticipated student-to-teacher ratio of 30:1.

At NCCA, students in grades 6-8, including many who may not have thrived in the traditional classroom, will engage in a challenging learning program that is tailored to their individual needs and focused on equipping them for success in the 21st century. The primary building blocks are individualized instruction, high-quality teaching, and parent involvement.

Individualized Instruction: Students are at the center of the Learning Triad, whose members include a face-to-face Learning Coach, one or more North Carolina-certified teachers, and trained Connections curriculum specialists. Students will work with rigorous curriculum aligned to not only the North Carolina Essential Standards but also the Common Core State Standards. The student planner shows a student's schedule of upcoming

lessons and activities on one convenient page. Learning Coaches can manage this web-based calendar for the entire family or just for an individual student. Instruction is customized to best fit their individual needs. Instruction focuses on the individual student and learning and assessments, including frequent formative assessments and teacher-directed curriculum-based assessments. Students, parents, and teachers use accurate and timely data allowing students' academic growth to be tracked over time. Individualizing instruction allows for multiple pathways for achievement. Teachers work with students individually on their Personalized Learning Plan (PLP) maximizing their potential by challenging academic strengths and diagnosing and addressing academic weaknesses. Teachers tap into a wide array of resources and modify lessons as needed for each student.

High-quality Teaching: North Carolina-certified teachers will implement the Core Standards for Facilitating Student Learning at Connections and will participate in a performance evaluation system aligned to the teaching standards, school goals, and student performance. Through ongoing teacher training and professional development, participation in professional learning communities, peer review, and a vibrant career ladder, teachers will be effective and consistently focused on continuous improvement and student learning. Leaders, using data from Connexus, will drive professional development both for individual teachers and the school as a whole.

Each student will have one or more North-Carolina-certified teacher specially trained in the curriculum and instructional method. Teachers will work closely with each student one-on-one using innovative technology tools and instructional pedagogy. The teacher will be responsible for teaching students, evaluating assignments and work products, providing instructional assistance, assigning and scoring assessments activities, and providing feedback on the student's performance. They also grade students in each subject and make promotion or retention decisions. Depending on the needs of the learner, teacher contact (via telephone, LiveLesson session, and WebMail) with the student varies and may be as frequent as several times a day (via WebMail and telephone) and at least once a week for each of the core courses via a scheduled LiveLesson session.

Parent Involvement. Parents, or another caring adult, will serve as Learning Coaches and play an active role in the learning process by providing input and communicating regularly with teachers. At the high school level, the Learning Coach will be less involved with daily instruction but will serve an important supervisory role for the student. Regular feedback through surveys and the StarTrack system encourages summative and formative feedback for the learning process and the program. Training is also provided to parents to ensure that they have the necessary tools and supports to be successful Learning Coaches. The whole family may get involved in health programs, community programs, and field trips.

Provide a synopsis of the planned curriculum, including:

1. **One** sample course scope and sequence (preferably in graph form) in the Appendices (Appendix B1) for one core subject (specific to the school's purpose) for the middle school division the school would ultimately serve.

2. *Identify how this curriculum aligns with the proposed charter school's mission, targeted student population, and North Carolina Accountability Model.*

NCCA's curriculum will prepare students for the global economy they will be living in and working in as adults. The personalized approach will provide important skills to students including independent thinking, problem solving, and collaborating not only with people in their community but potentially across the globe. Students will be prepared for the global economy with job skills for the 21st century. All of these features align with and support the mission of the school.

The Accountability and Curriculum Reform Effort (ACRE) addressed the Common Core State Standards and North Carolina Essential Standards. The curriculum and instructional program aligns with the Common Core State Standards for mathematics and English language arts as adopted by North Carolina, and also meets the state's own standards for English as a Second Language, Science, Social Studies, World Languages, Arts Education, and Healthful Living. Beyond the alignment of content, however, NCCA as a virtual school will be uniquely positioned to develop on a daily basis students' skills accessing, evaluating, and synthesizing information; working collaboratively with peers in cross-cultural settings to solve problems and apply knowledge; and to see themselves as empowered, ethical world citizens.

NCCA will also align with and support the new accountability model. NCCA will focus on measures of career and college readiness to ensure students are prepared for life post-high school and to ensure they have the critical academic skills to choose and follow their appropriate path. We understand that school performance will be reported with a letter grade of A, B, C, D, or F.

NCCA's proposed research-based curriculum (American Psychological Association's Learner-Centered Psychological Principles: A Framework for School Reform and Redesign <http://www.apa.org/ed/governance/bea/learner-centered.pdf>) uses proven instructional principles such as:

- * Curriculum fosters breadth and depth of understanding in subject area
- * Content is aligned to North Carolina Essential Standards and Common Core State Standards
- * Curriculum is supported by quality, reputable, recently published textbooks, and/or proven instructional resources and materials
- * Content and assessments are accurate and unbiased
- * Content is current, relevant, and provides real-world applications
- * Content is appropriate for the learner (age, ability, background, reading level, learning style)
- * Instructional design is adaptable and flexible to meet individual needs
- * Instructional design provides students opportunities to improve learning skills using technology (virtual labs and instruments, Teachlet tutorials, business software, online calculator)
- * Navigation is intuitive and age-appropriate
- * Scope of course is appropriate with regard to amount of content, length of course and lessons, and course requirements
- * Lesson introduction is effective and presents lesson objectives, accesses prior knowledge, sets expectations, and motivates
- * Background information prepares students to access new content, skills, and strategies
- * Curriculum includes opportunities for developing problem-solving and

critical-thinking skills and real-world applications, collaboration, and independent study, and oral and written communication skills

- * Curriculum incorporates ongoing formative assessment and provides timely and appropriate feedback to students and teachers

- * Curriculum promotes active learning (each Connections' curriculum course includes active learning elements, including online and/or offline interaction that address diverse learning styles and preferences, including textual, visual, auditory, and/or hands on)

3. *Describe the primary instructional strategies that the school will expect teachers to master and explain why these strategies will result in increased academic achievement for the targeted student population.*

Teachers who are hired to work at NCCA will hold an active North Carolina teaching certificate. The position requires a Bachelor's degree, and the school prefers to hire teachers with virtual school or distance learning teaching experience. Teachers must be skilled at teaching a standards-based curriculum and incorporating innovated approaches to instruction. Teachers will have good communication skills and be technology literate.

No matter the background of the teachers hired, all teachers will participate in professional development and training programs to ensure they master and implement best practices in virtual learning, including individualizing and personalizing the instruction and learning plans through the PLP process and the SSTAIR instructional model. Teachers will demonstrate mastery of the content and instructional strategies, and will be monitored for their use of these strategies to monitor and increase academic achievement.

Within the first 30 days of being hired, all teachers (and the principal) will complete either the Teacher Orientation Course (for new teachers) or the Returning Teacher Orientation Course (for returning teachers) and Exploring Your Courses. These courses will be delivered through Connexus, and contain lessons, assessments, and links to the online tutorials. The focus of these courses is to prepare teachers for teaching through the Connexus platform. They cover curriculum, assessment, personalizing instruction, school year events, grading, the grade book, communication, and essential Connexus tools. Upon successful completion of this course and assessments, teachers will be ready to begin instruction.

Teachers will be expected to earn a grade of 80% or higher in the course. Topics include:

- * A working knowledge of the curriculum and the SSTAIR instructional method
- * Strategies and best practices for virtual learning and instruction
- * How to monitor student progress and assign tiered-supplemental instructional support programs based on the data
- * How to differentiate instruction
- * How to utilize and navigate the tools of Connexus
- * How to develop the Personalized Learning Plans (PLP)
- * Assessment and how to utilize test results to guide instruction and monitor student progress
- * Knowledge of program processes and policies
- * How to foster a virtual school community

Individualizing instruction allows for multiple pathways for learner achievement. Supported by their teachers and Learning Coach, students will work individually on their PLP, maximizing their potential by ensuring that academic strengths are challenged and that any academic weaknesses are diagnosed and addressed. Teachers will customize their instruction to best fit a student's individual needs. Teachers tap into a wide array of resources and modify lessons as needed for each student.

Teachers will creatively personalize their approach to each student's learning. Teachers will provide focused learning opportunities through individual or small group lessons via the phone, LiveLesson sessions, Message Boards, and WebMail messages. Teachers will monitor and motivate students; continually assess students' progress; and modify, enhance, and supplement lessons to emphasize areas where students are deficient or have a particular strength or interest. Due to the flexible and individualized nature of the virtual learning environment, teachers will have the time and tools to develop a rapport with their students.

4. *Provide a school academic calendar in Appendix C (minimum of 185 instructional days or 1,025 hours).*
5. *Describe in a brief narrative below on how the calendar coincides with the tenets of the proposed mission and education plan.*

The Governing Board will approve the 10-month school year calendar annually. The academic calendar will include a minimum of 185 days or 1,025 hours of instruction (<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/fbs/accounting/calendar/>). To support the mission of a virtual school, the school calendar may be extended to allow students and families more flexibility in completing the work, or to provide extra learning time for students who are at risk (generally not by more than two weeks). Although there is more flexibility in a virtual school program than in a traditional school regarding when instruction occurs, students will be expected to follow the school calendar.

The Governing Board-approved school calendar will include days when teachers will not be available due to professional development (all other Support Services will be available during these days), and days when the school is completely closed (no Support Services will be available during these days). Student learning may continue during any days when the school is closed as students will still have access to their online course, learning content, and PLP.

9-12 Curriculum and Instructional Design:

Describe the basic learning environment (e.g., classroom-based, independent study), including class size and structure.

The school will be staffed with an anticipated student-to-teacher ratio of 30:1.

As with the program for middle school students mentioned previously, high school students (including many who may not have thrived in the traditional classroom) engage in a challenging learning program that is tailored to their individual needs and focused on equipping them for success in the 21st century. The primary building blocks are individualized instruction, high-quality teaching, and parent involvement.

NCCA will offer all courses required for high school graduation in North Carolina. The proposed curriculum was developed by a team of leading educational experts to integrate both online and offline resources to provide a well-rounded learning experience. The school will offer a robust selection of 17 College Board-approved Advanced Placement (R) course offerings.

The teachers will be dedicated, experienced 9-12 educators who are highly qualified specialists in their fields. The North Carolina-certified teachers will form strong, one-on-one educational relationships with students and provide personalized instruction. The program will allow students the ability to vary their pace and work from any location, and parents will be directly involved in their child's learning. All students will meet with a teacher to develop a Personalized Learning Plan (PLP) that will prepare them for success on any path they choose: college, the military, or a career.

Provide a synopsis of the planned curriculum, including:

1. *One sample course scope and sequence for one core subject (specific to the school's purpose) (Appendix B2).*
2. *As Appendix B3, provide a visual disseminating what courses (core content and electives) will be offered in year one through year five of the charter high school. Please ensure the projected staff and budget aligns with the course offerings.*
3. *Identify how this curriculum aligns with the proposed charter school's mission, targeted student population, and North Carolina Accountability Model.*

The curriculum will ensure college and career readiness by offering courses that fulfill all North Carolina graduation requirements, allow for dual enrollment and early college options, and address key skills that students need for success in the 21st century, as detailed in the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (www.21stcenturyskills.org). These skills include critical thinking and problem solving, global awareness, self-directed learning, collaboration skills, and technology literacy. The Teachlet tutorials embedded in lessons typically present concepts in a manner that addresses both fact/skill-level mastery and higher-order thinking, while the assessment section of each lesson typically includes constructed critical thinking responses in addition to measures of factual recall.

NCCA will provide a balanced, challenging high school experience focused on students' pursuing paths that lead to success, whether via college or immediate career choice. The student, parents, teachers, and their school counselor will monitor their personalized path along the way. NCCA will provide a comprehensive high school program with four levels of academic coursework: Foundations, Standard, Honors, and Advanced Placement. While all four levels are designed to meet state standards and provide students a rigorous curriculum, the four levels enable differentiation based on student needs, and college and career goals. The proposed high school curriculum consists of approximately 250 courses, including a wide variety of electives and intensive foreign language instruction from Spanish to Mandarin Chinese.

Students who enroll in the program from grades 6-8 and elect to continue into high school will notice that the high school curriculum introduces increased structure and a pacing system that encourages all the students in

a single class to move forward at a similar speed. The high school program involves more online experience than the program for younger students, as appropriate for secondary school learners. The high school program will include substantial teacher-directed instruction through synchronous and asynchronous e-learning tools. While hard copy textbooks may be provided in some core courses (generally along with an enhanced online version of the text as well), students may also take courses that provide textbooks and/or content that are online only. The high school core curriculum integrates digital and/or print versions of textbooks from major publishers with enhanced multimedia, interactive materials and resources, discussions, and communication/conferencing tools. In addition, students will have offline assignments, projects, novels, and practice work.

Each Connections course includes active learning elements (including online and/or offline interaction) that address diverse learning styles and preferences, including textual, visual, auditory, and/or hands-on. In total, Connections' courses include 1,800 Teachlet proprietary instructional movies and more than 1,000 primary source and instructional videos. Integrated "i-text" electronic textbooks are licensed from a variety of leading publishers including Pearson(R), Perfection Learning, and others while non-proprietary technology-based content is licensed from providers such as Grolier Online(R), Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, and Discovery Education(TM). In addition, the instructional design includes interactive LiveLesson sessions and threaded discussions.

4. Describe the primary instructional strategies that the school will expect teachers to master and explain why these strategies will result in increased academic achievement for the targeted student population.

High school teachers will implement instructional strategies similar to those of the middle school teachers. High school teachers will focus on individualizing instruction that allows for multiple pathways for learner achievement. Teachers will work with students on their individual PLPs, maximizing their potential by ensuring that academic strengths are challenged and that any academic weakness are diagnosed and addressed. Instruction will be customized to best fit a student's individual needs. Teachers will tap into a wide array of resources and modify lessons as needed for each student. Teachers will be provided training and ongoing professional development on the PLP process, as well as the SSTAIR instructional model. Teachers will demonstrate mastery of the content and instructional strategies, and will be monitored for their use of these strategies to monitor and increase academic achievement.

Teachers will creatively personalize their approach to each student's learning. Teachers will provide focused learning opportunities through individual or small group learning sessions via the phone, LiveLesson sessions, Message Boards, and WebMail messages. Teachers will teach students; monitor and motivate students; continually assess students' progress; and modify, enhance, and supplement lessons to emphasize areas where the students are deficient or have particular strength or interest. Due to the flexible and individualized nature of the virtual learning environment, teachers will have the time and ability to develop a rapport with their students.

NCCA will utilize ongoing online and offline assessments to measure student progress and a technology-based assessment tool to measure student gains over the school year. NCCA will use the results of the assessments to inform professional development plans and adjust the method of instruction to students accordingly. In addition, the automated alarm system embedded within Connexus alerts teachers, students, and parents when students are "Approaching Alarm" or in "Alarm" based on pre-set assessment indicators.

The Assessment Objective Performance Report (AOPR) provides real-time student performance data on essential skills and standards based upon individual math and language arts assessments. Teachers identify the objectives students should master by the end of that grade level based upon the North Carolina Essential State Standards and the Common Core State Standards, and the report displays students' performance against the objectives. Data can be sorted to identify students who have or have not mastered specific objectives.

5. *Explain how the proposed instructional plan and graduation requirements will ensure student readiness for college or other postsecondary opportunities (trade school, military service, or entering the workforce).*

Through a comprehensive guidance counseling program focused on college and career readiness, students will be provided career and work force resources, course options, and work student internship opportunities. NCCA will address credits, transcripts, and counseling. Teachers and counselors will use four-year academic progression plans for students to ensure they are on target for graduation and for meeting their college and career goals. A personalized progression plan, automated in Connexus, defines and tracks requirements that must be accomplished to meet a goal. The most common use will be to track students in meeting their graduation requirements. A wide variety of core and elective courses will be offered to meet North Carolina graduation requirements.

Students will have the option to take Career Technical Education (CTE) courses such as:

- * Accounting 1
- * Administrative Duties and Office Management
- * Anatomy and Physiology
- * Business Communication
- * Business Information Systems
- * Business Law
- * Criminal Investigation
- * Health, Safety, and Nutrition
- * Introduction to Business
- * Introduction to Criminal Justice
- * Introduction to Early Childhood Education
- * Introduction to Finance
- * Introduction to Homeland Security
- * Introduction to Law
- * Introduction to Medical Assisting
- * Introduction to Psychology
- * Introduction to Sociology
- * Introduction to Astronomy
- * Medical Terminology
- * Principles of Marketing

* Research Methods

The high school program will offer a rigorous college preparatory curriculum, providing an opportunity for students to enroll in Honors and AP courses. Students will be able to choose from dozen of Honors courses and 17 AP courses including:

- * AP Art History
- * AP Biology
- * AP Calculus AB
- * AP Calculus BC
- * AP Computer Science A
- * AP English Language and Composition
- * AP English Literature and Composition
- * AP Environmental Science
- * AP Human Geography
- * AP Macroeconomics
- * AP Microeconomics
- * AP Physics B
- * AP Psychology
- * AP Spanish Literature
- * AP Statistics
- * AP United States Government
- * AP United States History

Honors courses will provide students with opportunities to participate in extension projects, investigations, and activities that require integrated skills application and higher-level thinking and understanding. Counselors will carefully review each student's transcript to determine when an Honors course is appropriate. NCCA will monitor the success of intellectually gifted students by reviewing and assessing performance on state assessments, Scantron assessments, AP exams, the ACT and SAT, and by tracking college acceptances of high school seniors.

Graduates of schools supported by Connections have been accepted at Queens University of Charlotte, the College of William and Mary, Old Dominion University, Savannah College of Art and Design, LaGrange College, Xavier University of Louisiana, the University of Notre Dame, the United States Air Force Academy, Southern Methodist University, the University of Tennessee, and hundreds of other colleges. The counselor will work with post-secondary institutions to arrange college explorations for NCCA students.

6. If implemented, describe how the proposed charter school will meet the Future-Ready Core requirements. Provide details on how the students will earn credit hours, how grade-point averages will be calculated, what information will be on transcripts?

NCCA will meet the Future-Ready Core requirements (<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/gradrequirements/resources/gradchecklists.pdf>):

- * English - 4 credits
- * Math - 4 credits
- * Science - 3 credits
- * Social Studies - 4 credits
- * Health & Physical Education - 1 credit
- * Electives or Other Requirements - 6 credits

* Second Language (although not required for graduation, students will be encouraged to take 2 credits as that is the minimum requirement for admission into a university in the UNC system)

High school students will be awarded credit only for courses in which they have earned a grade of 70% or better. This applies both to courses taken at NCCA and at other schools. Previous courses taken at other schools in which the student earned a grade below a 70% will not be awarded with transfer credit, but will appear on student records.

Student transcripts will be maintained in Connexus. For high school students, school counselors will enter data from previous schools' transcripts into the External Course Tool, adding the information to the students' NCCA transcript. Courses completed in NCCA will appear on the transcript as "In Progress" during the semester, and as "Completed" once the final grading is finished. Students and Learning Coaches will always have access to view and print a copy of the transcript. They can also request that hard copies of official transcripts be printed and sent to the family or an outside entity (e.g., college or university). Parent (or students 18 or over) must first sign an Authorization to Release Educational Records form before official transcripts can be submitted to any outside entity. When the authorization is submitted, the school will mark the appropriate fields in Connexus accordingly and upload a scanned version, if needed. Transcripts will normally be provided within two school days of receiving the signed authorization form.

Connections Education (of which Connections Academy is a division) is accredited by AdvancED (Accrediting agency serving 27,000 public and private school districts <http://www.advanc-ed.org/>). In addition, in an effort to ensure transferability of credits, NCCA will, within the first two to three years of operation, apply for accreditation through the Southern Association of Colleges and School Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CAS()) similar to other school supported by Connections in South Carolina, Georgia, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas, and Florida. Also, most high school courses are approved through the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) through a rigorous approval process to meet the NCAA requirements for initial-eligibility for college athletes (http://www.connectionsacademy.com/Libraries/PDFs/NCAA_Approved_Course_List.pdf).

The curriculum uses a standard whereby one credit equals approximately 160 hours of instruction (North Carolina requires 150 clock hours - <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/curriculum/home/graduationrequirements.pdf>). In order to graduate, each student must successfully complete a minimum of 24 credits (two more than the 22 required by the North Carolina Future-Ready Core Course of Study Requirements) in the subjects and subject areas that will be outlined in the school handbook. Units completed must meet or exceed the graduation requirements. Graduation requirements will be set by the Governing Board through policy and will comply with North Carolina graduation requirements.

7. *Provide a school academic calendar in Appendix C (minimum of 185 instructional days or 1,025 hours)*

8. *Describe in a brief narrative below on how the calendar coincides with the tenets of the proposed mission and education plan.*

The high school calendar will mirror the middle school calendar. The Governing Board will approve the 10-month school year calendar annually. The academic calendar will include a minimum of 185 days or 1,025 hours of instruction (<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/fbs/accounting/calendar/>). To support the mission of a virtual school, the school calendar may be extended to allow students and families more flexibility in competing work, or to provide extra learning time for students who are at risk (generally by not by more than two weeks). Although there is flexibility in a virtual school program than in a traditional school regarding when instruction occurs, students will be expected to follow the school calendar.

The Governing Board-approved calendar will include days when teachers will not be available due to professional development (all other Support Services will be available during these days) and days when the school is completely closed (no Support Services will be available during these days). Student learning may continue during any days when the school is closed as students will have access to their online courses, learning content, and PLPs.

Whole Child Development

1. *Discuss all extra-curricular programs that will be offered to students that may attend the proposed virtual charter school.*

NCCA will offer many clubs and activities. Students will have access to more than 22 clubs and activities through which they can explore interests beyond the classroom, develop leadership skills, and make friends within the school. Clubs and activities include online and in-person meetings. Some of the clubs and activities include:

Art Club: The club sparks students' creativity by exploring art, photography, and graphic design. Students explore the nuances of each medium and have the opportunity to create and share their own creative designs. Optional LiveLesson sessions let students interact with art experts.

Chess Club: Club members learn, socialize, and play in an atmosphere of friendly competition. After completing an online tutorial for either beginner or advanced players, students are matched with competitors of the same skill level and games begin. Students can even play in a nation tournament on an exclusive Connections site.

Environmental Club: Students work together to learn about and discuss environmental issues at the local, national, and global level. Each week features a project students can work on at home to help the environment. Special guest speakers participate in the club as well, adding breadth to the club.

Robotics Club: The club guides students through the exciting world of robots. Students define what a robot is (and what it is not), study the myths that surround robots, examine how robots are used in movies and stories, and consider how robots assist humans. Experts in the field of robotics help students learn more about artificial intelligence and what the future holds for humans and machines.

Student Leadership and Service Club: Students take on roles in both leadership and service. The group meets twice a month to discuss service projects and hear from guest speakers active in different aspects of professional leading.

Student Newspaper: The Monitor is the student-managed, student-staffed monthly newspaper. As they work together, students learn about group dynamics, organization strategies, and team building exercises while researching and writing stories on current events, sports, entertainment, and fashion.

A club in a school supported by Connections in Pennsylvania won the state engineering competition for a third year in a row, competing against brick-and-mortar and other virtual schools, and took second place in the national competition, proving that the program is an ideal combination of real-world face-to-face learning and virtual education.

Representatives of NCCA met with the North Carolina Council on Economic Education, North Carolina Rural Entrepreneurship through Action Learning, Artspace, the Museum of Life + Science, and the Joel Lane Museum House in November 2013 to discuss educational partnerships.

NCCA will produce monthly newsletters that celebrate student and school successes, showcase student work, provide tips from teachers, and highlight upcoming events. Connections also produces an online yearbook, in which students are encouraged to participate. NCCA will apply for a chapter of the National Honor Society. Of schools supported by Connections nationwide, 19 are members of the National Honor Society and 15 are members of the National Junior Honor Society.

Students who have demonstrated outstanding talent in the performing arts, competitive sports, or math and science will have the opportunity to flourish at one of the school's three proposed specialty academies devoted to fostering focused growth: the Sports Academy, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) Academy, and the Performing Arts Academy. These academies will give students the opportunity to network with other students in their fields of interest. The academies will also provide guest speakers, collaborative projects, activities, and competitions to help students excel in their areas of interest.

- 2. Describe when and how the virtual school will bring students together for social functions thereby creating and promoting the school's culture.*

Families are encouraged to participate in various back-to-school and end-of-the-year events such as picnics or bowling leagues as well as educational field trips offered throughout the year. These activities and events are organized through the school staff and Community Coordinators throughout the state. Community Coordinators are volunteer parents whom NCCA will support in organizing such activities for families who live nearby. Families are notified through WebMail and the school newsletters. In addition, clubs and activities let students:

- * Easily make friends and have fun*
- * Connect with students throughout the state and across the country*
- * Develop leadership skills*
- * Explore new interests and expand knowledge*
- * Participate in contests and competitions*

Face-to-face activities include field trips and community outings facilitated by staff and/or Community Coordinators. Field trips may include, but will not be limited to, visits such as:

- * Artspace (Wake County)*
- * Joel Lane Museum House (Wake County)*
- * Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts & Culture (Mecklenburg County)*
- * Carolinas Aviation Museum (Mecklenburg County)*
- * Museum of Life + Science (Durham County)*
- * North Carolina Arboretum (Buncombe County)*

- * *Wright Brothers National Memorial (Dare County)*
- * *International Civil Rights Center and Museum (Guilford County)*

3. *Explain the process utilized to attend to student health through physical education class, healthful living instruction, and other activities.*

NCCA is committed to ensuring students participate in a planned physical education program designed to optimize their physical, mental, emotional, and social development. We will ensure students are engaged in a variety of physical activities and sports they enjoy and will pursue throughout their lives. The physical education program will support state standards and will:

- * *Maintain physical, social, and emotional health in students by practicing healthy behaviors and goal setting*
- * *Engage students in a physically active lifestyle*
- * *Be age and developmentally appropriate and be taught at each grade level*
- * *Focus on the acquisition of important personal, interpersonal, and life skills*
- * *Be coordinated and managed by an education professional*
- * *Engage parents and community members*
- * *Be periodically reviewed, evaluated, updated, and improved.*

To ensure students utilize safe, efficient, and effective movement to develop and maintain a healthy, active lifestyle and will apply health-related and skill-related fitness concepts and skills, students will be enrolled in a comprehensive, sequential physical education program that includes:

- * *The Presidential Fitness Challenge*
- * *Healthy, safety, and physical education available to students in all grades (one credit is required for a student to earn a high school diploma in North Carolina)*
- * *Grades 6-8 physical education courses that integrate the Connections Physical Fitness Program, the Personal Fitness Program, and Yoga. The courses will provide students with the option to start with one program and choose another as they proceed through the course or to participate in the same program throughout the course. Course content generally includes nutrition guidelines and tips for leading a healthy lifestyle.*
- * *High school core and elective courses in physical education, personal fitness, and health fitness and nutrition.*

Teachers will monitor student participation and performance using the escalation system, the schools' grade book, and Curriculum Based Assessments. To track students' day-to-day physical activities and to ensure participation, Connections developed a proprietary "Activity Tracker" tool that enables students to personalize an electronic log to track activity type, duration, and frequency, such as jogging, aerobic training, flexibility training, yoga, etc. The activity type and time requirements auto-populate by grade and state requirements. Students will export the data to their teacher and the data will be used to verify students have engaged in physical fitness activities and have met the requirements.

4. *Provide an overview of the virtual charter school's counseling services to address development of the whole child. Be sure to include specifics related to future academic decisions, student disengagement, and emotional growth.*

NCCA's counselors will be dedicated to helping students reach their full potential, assisting with:

- * *Academic goal-setting, scheduling, and planning*
- * *Personal and social development*
- * *College and career planning*
- * *Helping students succeed*

With master's degrees and specialized training, counselors will be skilled at helping students address the personal, social, and academic issues that can affect their success in school and life. Counselors hired in North Carolina will have appropriate licenses and state certifications. The counseling program is built on relationships, so counselors are readily accessible to students and families - online, in person, and by phone. With the additional support from Connections and its collaborative network of school counselors, counselors will bring both individual attention and national expertise to students and families.

Counselors will carefully review each student's transcripts to determine when and Honors or AP course is appropriate. Counselors will help high school students prepare for college and career with:

- * Personal Learning Plans focusing on post-graduation goals*
- * Interactive LiveLesson sessions connecting families with real-time information on financial aid and scholarships, college application processes, entrance requirements, and more*
- * College test preparation courses for the SAT examinations*
- * One-on-one counseling with seniors to provide resources and assistance with post-secondary planning, including career options, vocational training, and selecting the right college*

- 5. List strategies teachers will use to build positive, nurturing relationships for instruction through the proposed portal.*

Connexus allows parents, counselors, teachers, and students to work together in a safe and supportive environment. Connexus allows communication with teachers and other students and families via secure WebMail messages and Message Boards. LiveLesson sessions, with individual and small groups of students using voice-over IP, chat, electronic whiteboard, and shared web surfing, allow teachers and students to interact with one another in real time in a virtual classroom. Threaded discussions on course-based message boards will also be used as appropriate by grade level to provide opportunities for collaboration and interaction. Teachers will be further trained in creating online student communities and in developing a personal rapport with students through frequent communications and interactions.

*Teachers will be trained in the importance of providing students with feedback that is timely, specific, meaningful, and actionable. Professional development sessions will provide teachers with examples of effective feedback based on the research of Grant Wiggins in his book, *Seven Keys to Effective Feedback*. Teachers will learn that effective feedback is directly tied to a shared goal between the learner and the teacher. Hands-on activities and analysis of sample feedback will help teachers learn how to provide feedback that gives students the opportunity to improve the task, or more successfully reach the desired goal.*

Feedback will be provided in many ways - through the use of rubrics, WebMail messages, grade book comments, and Curriculum Based Assessments (CBAs), which are conducted with the students via phone. Teachers will use message boards and LiveLesson sessions to allow students to work with their peers and gain feedback from each other.

The proposed curriculum includes many rubrics for students, teachers, and families. Rubrics play a role in ensuring that learners understand what is expected of them. Rubrics also provide focus for teachers and insight for students to understand how submitted work measures up to expectations. Teachers will use guiding questions and provide students with specific feedback on rubrics, including suggestions for improvement.

Special Programs and "At-Risk" Students

1. *Describe the methods and clear systems of prevention and intervention teachers will utilize to provide assistance to students that are not performing at expected levels: ensuring continued progress and academic student growth.*

The NCCA staff will be supported by Connections experts in special education, gifted educations, and English language learning. Teachers will regularly differentiate and personalize instruction as part of the SSTAIR instructional model, a multi-tiered Response to Intervention (RTI) model. SSTAIR involved administering universal screeners, implementing targeted interventions as needed, conducting regular assessments, monitoring progress, and collecting data to measure the student's response to intervention. NCCA's multi-disciplinary Student Support Team (SST) will meet regularly to identify and discuss strategies to assist struggling students and communicate with parents about their children's success.

Teachers will use universal screeners such as LEAP, DIBELs as appropriate, and Scantron pre-, mid-, and post-assessments, as well as general education progress and curriculum-based assessments, to identify struggling students and intervene initially at the Tier 1 Level. Tier 1 interventions include proprietary and third-party tools and strategies to differentiate instruction. If data shows students did not make progress with Tier 1 interventions, students will then be moved to Tier 2 in the SSTAIR model where they are referenced to the SST.

Tier 2 interventions include targeted, small group LiveLesson sessions as well as enrollment in Supplementary Instruction Support Programs (SISPs) such as SuccessMaker(R) and MathXL(R). Data collected from these SISps and results of progress monitoring probes will be used to monitor student progress. Adjustments to interventions will be made in a timely manner based on data. If a student is still not progressing after interventions, the data will be used to determine the student's greatest area of need, and a special education or Section 504 referral will be completed. NCCA staff will collect all data and make the special education referral in a timely manner according to best practice and state special education regulations. Interventions will continue during the referral process.

As part of the SSTAIR model, students who are working below grade level based on state assessment results will also benefit from PACE (TM) (Program for All Children to Excel), a Tier 3 intervention program focusing on building proficiency in reading and math skills. Parents will be notified in the fall that their student qualifies for PACE, and their cooperation will be secured for a series of intensive LiveLesson sessions with the student and his or her teacher focusing on the areas of weaknesses. Students placed in PACE are typically those who need intense, but not special education, Tier 3 interventions.

With its record of accomplishment and experience with remediation for mastery of essential skills, NCCA's partnership with Connections assures that NCCA will have access to all needed expertise in addressing the needs of low-achieving students. Schools supported by Connections have demonstrated success with special needs populations. Nationally, approximately 9.8% of students enrolled in schools supported by Connections have an IEP. The individualization of the program will help meet the

diversity of needs, linguistic structures, and unique cultures that are valued in North Carolina.

2. *Explain how the instructional plan and curriculum will meet the needs of English Language Learner (ELL) students, including the following:*
 - a) *Methods for identifying ELL students.*
 - b) *Specific instructional programs, practices, and strategies the school will employ to ensure academic success and equitable access to the core academic program for ELL students.*
 - c) *Plans for monitoring and evaluating the progress and success of ELL students, including exiting students from ELL services.*

NCCA will follow state procedures to identify English Language Learners (ELLs). NCCA will designate an ELL Lead. The ELL Lead will work with content teachers, Learning Coaches, and students to ensure content material is adapted and accessible for all ELL students. The ELL Lead has a key role in ensuring integration of students into the school community. The ELL Lead will maintain student files; provide instructional consultation to Learning Coaches; provide direct instruction to ELL students via LiveLesson sessions and telephone calls; conduct progress monitoring throughout the school year; create and implement targeted interventions based on data from progress monitoring; monitor exited ELL students for academic progress using state-specific criteria for two years; and stay current on state legislation pertaining to ELL students.

All incoming families will complete home language surveys. If a language other than English is spoken by parents or the student, the student will be screened to identify their English proficiency level. If there is no record of a student having taken the state-required WIDA W-APT language-screening test, NCCA will test the student within 30 days of enrollment in-person by trained test administrators. NCCA will notify parents or legal guardians of the screening test result and program placement decisions according to North Carolina procedures. NCCA will provide notifications in English and in a language that parents can understand, to the extent feasible.

Once identified as an ELL, a student will be provided support based on the English proficiency level via LiveLesson sessions by a certified ELL teacher. Instruction will be standards-aligned and based on scientific research for English Language acquisition using the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) framework to help students attain English proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. In sheltered support classes, grade level content will be made comprehensible for ELLs, and teachers will promote academic language skills. ELL students at NCCA will fully participate in the core curriculum.

NCCA will assess progress in all ELL students' English proficiency, and use data to inform ELL instructional decisions. All ELL students will participate in the state's annual language proficiency assessment, ACCESS for ELLs. ACCESS test results will help determine program placement and allow teachers to adapt content to individual student needs. All mandated state tests will be administered to ELL students as required by law.

NCCA will also inform parents of the right to 'opt out' of language programs. Upon declining, students will continue in their regular core curriculum. However, students who 'opt out' of services must continue to

participate in the state's annual language proficiency assessment, the ACCESS for ELLs. NCCA will continue to notify students' parents of the assessment and results.

When a student demonstrates proficiency, a school-based team consisting of the ELL Lead, the student's content teachers, and the student's parents or legal guardians, will decide whether the student still needs ELL instruction. They will use the ACCESS scores, NCCA class performance, academic grades, and teacher recommendations to determine the student's language classification. If the team determines that the student is English proficient and can successfully perform in classes without significant language support, they will be reclassified and moved to the monitoring stage. NCCA will monitor ELL students for academic progress using state-specific criteria for two years after program exit.

A Connections ELL specialist will work with NCCA teachers, Learning Coaches, and students to adapt the core material for ELL students and provide appropriate supplemental resources, including various technologies to facilitate language acquisition.

3. *Explain how the school will identify and meet the needs of intellectually gifted students, including the following:*
 - a) *Specific instructional programs, practices, strategies, and opportunities the school will employ or provide to enhance their abilities.*
 - b) *Plans for monitoring and evaluating the progress and success of intellectually gifted students.*

Academically or intellectually gifted students will also thrive at NCCA. NCCA will implement the robust Connections Gifted and Talented program for middle school students and the Honors/AP program for high school students. Together, both programs achieved a 97% parent satisfaction rating in schools supported by Connections nationally.

The NCCA placement process will assure that gifted students are placed appropriately according to the North Carolina Academically or Intellectually Gifted Program Standards. NCCA will inform families and the NCCA community through website postings and school-wide communications regarding gifted offerings. Through shared inquiry discussions and classes designed specifically for the gifted student, high achievers will be able to investigate in a safe environment what it means to be gifted.

NCCA will also offer a focused gifted program for selected grades. This approach will incorporate the same educational standards as the standard offering, but with more challenging assignments that will be covered at an accelerated pace. Enrichment activities that expand upon lesson topics and promote higher-level thinking and understanding will be provided. Gifted learners will be grouped together and given opportunities for group interaction through LiveLesson sessions.

The middle school (grades 6-8) Gifted and Talented program will provide gifted students the opportunities and challenges they need to be successful while learning at their own pace. During the enrollment and placement process, students may be placed in different curriculum levels for different subjects. For example, a sixth grader with a high aptitude in math could be

placed in an eighth grade math course, while continuing to take six grade level courses in other subjects. Gifted students in grades 6-8 will also have the opportunity to be enrolled in specially designated gifted courses in language arts, mathematics, and science. Gifted courses will allow students greater opportunities to interact with the teacher and other students; explore grade-level content; participate in extension projects, investigations, and activities that integrate skills and promote higher-level thinking; participate in individualized activities to develop and apply knowledge; and chose from a wide variety of electives and club activities to supplement learning in core subjects. NCCA will also offer an exclusive online version of Junior Great Books(R) where students will enjoy age-appropriate works and participate in online literary inquiry and discussions with other high-ability students.

The high school program offers a rigorous college preparatory curriculum that provides an opportunity for students to enroll in Honors and AP courses. High school students may choose from dozens of Honors courses and nearly 17 AP courses as well as Independent Study course that will allow students with special interests to design their own focused course of study. Honors courses will offer advanced students opportunities to participate in extension projects, investigations, and activities that require integrated skills application and higher-level thinking. School counselors will carefully review each student's transcript to determine when an Honors course is appropriate. Course selection will be made in close consultation with students and their parents.

Parents will be informed of procedures to resolve disagreements between themselves and NCCA regarding identification and provision of services to their academically or intellectually gifted child.

NCCA will monitor the progress of intellectually gifted students and evaluate the services offered by reviewing and assessing performance on grade-level assessments, national exams, and by tracking college acceptances of high school seniors.

Exceptional Children

*The public charter school cannot deny admission to any child eligible for special education services as identified under the federal legislation Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), IDEA regulations, and Article 9 115C of the North Carolina General Statutes, North Carolina Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities. **All public schools are responsible for hiring licensed and 'highly qualified' special educators pursuant to law.** Public schools are required to provide a full continuum of services to meet the unique needs of ALL students with disabilities.*

Identification and Records

- 1. Explain how you will identify students who are enrolled within the charter school that have previously been found to be eligible for special education services or are protected under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.*
- 2. Provide the process for identifying students who may be eligible for special education services as identified in the federal 'Child Find' mandate. Be sure to include how student evaluations and assessments will be completed.*
- 3. Provide a plan detailing how the records of students with disabilities and 504 Accommodation plans will be properly managed.*

- a) *Requesting Records from previous schools*
- b) *Record Confidentiality (on site)*
- c) *Record Compliance (on site)*

NCCA will serve students with disabilities and will remain in compliance with all state and federal IDEA regulations for public schools.

IEP Review: NCCA will enroll any student with an IEP and provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). NCCA staff will request and review the existing IEP during the enrollment process. Upon enrollment, NCCA will provide special education services comparable to those in the student's previous IEP to the extent possible until and IEP team meeting is held, the existing IEP is adopted or amended, and the change in placement is documented in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.

Annual Reviews & Reevaluation: The NCCA Special Education Coordinator will facilitate annual reviews including transition plans, and provide parents with procedural safeguards. In accordance with state and federal IDEA regulations, with parental consent, students will be reevaluated every three years. Parent(s) may request up to one new evaluation per year at NCCA's expense. After the reevaluation, an IEP team will develop a new IEP. Meetings may be held at the teaching/learning center, at a mutually agreeable site, by telephone, or by LiveLesson session and parental agreement will be obtained.

Identification/Child Find: The NCCA staff and administration will comply with state and federal Child Find regulations. Staff will review enrolling student records. The Special Education Coordinator will serve as the Child Find coordinator and provide Child Find information to school staff, parents, and state and local organizations and agencies.

Pre-referral/Referral/Evaluation: The SST, consisting of general education teachers, intervention specialists, and school administrators will regularly review struggling students. The SST will consult with the parent(s) and address struggling students' needs through the Response to Intervention (RTI) process. The teacher will implement and document interventions and the student's response to interventions with parental consent, a special education evaluation may take place concurrently with the RTI process as appropriate. The evaluation will be coordinated with the parent and an evaluator in close proximity to the student. Once the evaluation is complete, the parent(s) will join an interdisciplinary team meeting to review the assessment results and determine the student's eligibility for special education, completing the process within 90 days of NCCA's receipt of signed parental consent for evaluation.

Rehabilitation Act of 1973 - Section 504 Students. NCCA will write Section 504 plans for students who are not receiving services under IDEA but require accommodations and modifications to their instructional program including modified instructional materials or assistive technology. Existing Section 504 plans will remain in place for new students. NCCA personnel will identify Section 504 Eligible Students and will complete a plan for each identified eligible student.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). NCCA will fully comply

with the requirements of FERPA and IDEA. FERPA allows for certain exceptions that would allow NCCA to receive student education records from a previous school without the prior written consent of parents. However, upon enrollment in NCCA, parents will be asked to sign a Release of Records form as written consent for the release of their student's education records from the student's previous district. NCCA will request parents' written consent for the release of their student's education records to a third party. The school will also comply with the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment and the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act of 1998 (COPPA). NCCA will address record compliance with a records management program that addresses the creation, maintenance, storage, and final destruction of records in accordance with North Carolina laws and regulations.

Exceptional Children's Education Programming

1. *Describe the educational programs, strategies, and additional supports the school will provide to ensure a full continuum of services for students with disabilities.*
2. *Describe the methods and support systems that will be in place to ensure students with disabilities receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).*
3. *Describe how implementation of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) will be monitored and reported to the student, parents and relevant staff.*
4. *Describe the proposed plan for providing related services.*

Virtual schools like NCCA open up a vast range of possibilities and options for the delivery of the full continuum of special education and related services such as speech-language, occupation, or physical therapy, psychological counseling, and other services to eligible students. Services for NCCA students with disabilities include, but are not limited to:

*Consultative support to the general education teachers to provide modifications and accommodations to the general education curriculum

*Direct special education support to a student, which may be provided via the telephone, Internet, LiveLesson sessions, as well as in person depending on the needs of the student

*Direct related service support (e.g., speech-language, occupational, or physical therapy and psychological counseling) provided face-to-face, via computer, or in homes, community sites, and therapist offices

*Related services may also include parent training, autism support, parent groups, student support groups, and itinerant hearing or vision support consistent with the student's IEP

*Ongoing progress monitoring for every student, including frequent and thorough review of student performance, attendance, and participation data as reported to the student, parent, and teacher through their respective home pages

*Regular progress reporting to parents at least as frequently as general education progress reporting

*Careful logging in Connexus of every conversation (by phone, WebMail message, LiveLesson session, or other means) and consultation with the student and/or parent as well as general education teachers

*Specific tracking and reporting for providers of direct/related services, with close scrutiny by the special education staff of any missed appointments or incomplete services

The school will comply with all state and federal policies regarding enrollment of special education. During the enrollment phase, Connections and NCCA staff will request any special education documentation from the

parent(s) or prior school district and then review each IEP to determine the level of each student's needs and consider the types of services that are required. NCCA's Special Education department will work closely with the general education teachers to ensure that every student is included with their non-disabled peers and has access to the general education curriculum to the maximum extent possible.

Since NCCA will be a program focused on individualization, it is a good fit for most students with special needs. In addition to the regular placement activities, the Manager of Special Education (or designee) will review each IEP, analyzing the level of functioning, educational needs, and suggested accommodations/modifications to determine how NCCA can meet the student's needs in the least restrictive environment. To support enrolled students with IEPs, NCCA will:

- * Conduct IEP meetings for all new students to adopt the IEP, amend the IEP, or conduct an Annual Review. Parents will be active participants in the IEP meetings and will be provided with Prior Written Notice detailing the decisions of the IEP team.
- * Hold annual reviews of the IEP, including reviewing student progress within the existing IEP and creating new IEP goals.
- * Provide a Manager of Special Education, who will be a qualified administrator to oversee and participate in IEP meetings and all elements of the special education program.
- * Conduct triennial reviews, in which students may be formally reassessed, or, if no new data is needed, then a review of the records may take place.

NCCA will benefit from Connections' more than ten years of experience in identifying and successfully servicing students with a wide range of learning needs and styles. Training is provided throughout the year to the Manager of Special Education and teachers.

A Connections mentor with experience in virtual school implementation of IDEA and corresponding state regulations will be assigned to the school. Connections will also provide extensive training for the school leadership team and the Manager of Special Education on identification and service delivery for students with disabilities.

NCCA will be committed to meeting the unique needs of all enrolled students. Through highly qualified North Carolina-certified teachers and the personalized approach of learning for each student, and parental involvement, the Governing Board will be focused on student success, both academically and emotionally for each NCCA student.

As a public school, NCCA will, through its policies and procedures, comply with all applicable requirements of the IDEA Act, 20 U.S.C. 1400et seq. and implementing regulations, including Section 300.209 of Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. 794 (Section 504). NCCA will provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) to children with disabilities, including but not limited to, identifying, evaluating, and planning educational programs, and implementing placements in accordance with the those Acts.

Special Services

Describe how the virtual charter school will do the following:

- 1. Identify students with special needs as identified by the Child Find mandate within the virtual environment.*

During the enrollment process, parents will be asked if their student has or has had an IEP or Section 504 plan. The answer to this question will alert the Special Education Coordinator of the enrolling student. The student's cumulative physical files will also be examined closely upon receipt to determine if the student has an IEP or Section 504 plan. Both the IEP and the Section 504 plan will be implemented to the fullest extent possible until the SST meets within the North Carolina-prescribed timelines to adopt, amend, or create a new IEP or Section 504 plan.

If a student does not enroll with an IEP or Section 504 plan and NCCA suspects that student requires special education services (based on teachers observation, assessment data, or parental concern) the following procedures will be initiated:

** The student's teacher will utilize SSTAIR, NCCA's RTI model, to track the student's response to the implementation of multi-tiered instruction and interventions by skills and standards. The teacher will alert NCCA's multidisciplinary SST and interventions, progress monitoring data, and strategies will be discussed. Parents will be made aware of the need for intervention through the student's Personalized Learning Plan. The teacher will collect data and document progress and lack thereof with Tier 1 interventions. If no progress is made, the teacher will refer the student to the SST and the SST will determine next steps.*

** If it is determined that the student needs an evaluation, parental consent for the student evaluation will be requested via an assessment plan. Parents will be sent a copy of the Procedural Safeguards. The RTI process will continue.*

** When the signed parental consent is returned to NCCA, the appropriate evaluations will be arranged and conducted by an evaluator in close proximity to the student's home.*

** Once the evaluation is complete, parent(s) will be invited to the multidisciplinary evaluation team meeting to review the assessment results. The team will determine if the student has a disability, requires special education services, and which least-restrictive special education services are required. A comprehensive IEP will be developed, including post-secondary transition as appropriate, documenting student-specific accommodations and modifications and specially designed instruction according to all federal and state regulations.*

** If a student becomes ineligible or leaves the charter school, NCCA will ensure that all appropriate paperwork is submitted and/or appropriate documentation is forwarded to the new school.*

- 2. Provide specified services to the enrolled students with special needs regardless of where the student resides within North Carolina.*

Special education services will be provided to students with special needs, regardless of where the student resides, in several ways including but not limited to: consultative services by phone, direct small group or one-on-one instruction via LiveLesson sessions, and LiveLesson session-facilitated collaboration and co-teaching between the school's general education staff and special education teacher. Related services such as speech-language or occupational therapy will be provided virtually or face-to-face according to student needs.

The individualized focus of a virtual school, along with the one-on-one learning environment, often has a positive impact on a student's ability to participate in the general education environment. While a special education student in a brick-and-mortar school may need to be removed from a busy classroom in order to focus, in a virtual school that same student may need minimal special education support to progress satisfactorily in the general education curriculum. The IEP Team will create an IEP based on

the student's individual needs.

3. *Hold Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings and where such meetings will occur.*

In order to make efficient use of staff resources, IEP meeting may be held at either the teaching/learning center, at another site, via teleconferencing, or through LiveLesson sessions to allow all parties to participate. Specific arrangements will be made on a case-by-case basis and will be in accordance with applicable law. NCCA will maintain responsibility for tracking and implementing IEP timelines and requirements as per the appropriate laws and regulations for charter schools.

4. *Implement Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Rehabilitation Act standards for accessibility to web-based curricula.*

NCCA will provide access to online content, curriculum, and instruction to all students. NCCA is committed to provide equal opportunity, equal treatment, and meet the obligations to make accommodations or modifications to avoid disability-based discrimination. NCCA will make every effort to abide by federal regulations found in IDEA as well as Sections 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. With this in mind, it is NCCA's goals to include the following accessibility features:

- * Students can navigate their lesson content using only the keyboard
- * The content and structure can be understood by a student using a screen reader (e.g., JAWS, NVDA), a text reader (e.g., Snap and Read), or other types of assistive technology (e.g., voice recognition software or Dragon Naturally Speaking)
- * There are text equivalents for all non-text media. This includes captions and/or alternative descriptions and assignments for audio, video, images, and other forms of media.
- * As appropriate closed captioning and/or American Sign Language translation is provided for LiveLesson sessions.

These features have been identified as the foundation of both the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines Version 2.0 Level AA and the Section 508 Technical Standards.

Connections provides an Accessibility Support Desk (888-639-5960). Students (including those who are vision-impaired, blind, deaf, and/or hard of hearing) can call the support desk and schedule appointments with the Accessibility Associate who will assist the student with access. Connections continuously reviews emerging technologies and resulting innovative learning tools in order to enhance ease of access.

5. *Provide information about how the charter school will accommodate non-English speaking students while also addressing their needs in online and offline instruction or other educational activities.*

Using up-to-date screening results, teachers will implement a program based upon the student's English language proficiency level. Highly qualified teachers will support English Language Learners (ELLs) through phone conferences and consultation with colleagues and Learning Coaches and direct instruction via LiveLesson sessions targeting reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Continuous progress monitoring will inform the level of support each student needs.

Once identified as ELL, student will be provided support based on the English proficiency level in ESL classes taught via LiveLesson sessions by a certified ELL teacher. They will be aligned to standards and based on scientific research for English language acquisition. The targeted and individualized instructional support provided in the LiveLesson sessions will focus on helping students attain English proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking using the SIOP.

In sheltered content classes, grade level content will be made comprehensible for ELLs, and teachers will promote developing academic language skills. In addition, the ELL Lead will work with content teachers, Learning Coaches, and students to ensure content material is adapted and accessible for all ELL students.

Student Performance Standards

1. *Describe the student performance standards for the school as a whole.*
2. *Explain the use of any evaluation tool or assessment that the proposed charter school will use in addition to any state or federally mandated tests. Describe how this data will be used to drive instruction and improve the curriculum over time for the benefit of students.*
3. *Explain the policies and standards for promoting students, including students with special needs, from one grade level to the next. Discuss how and when promotion criteria will be communicated to parents and students.*
4. *Provide the public charter school's exit standards for graduating **ALL** students. These standards should set forth what students in the **last grade served** will know and be able to do. Be sure to include plans for the "At-Risk" population.*

The school's performance will be measured and communicated continuously to parents, reported monthly to the Governing Board, and accounted for through an annual report to the Department of Public Instruction.

1. State and Federal Accountability

Goal #1: NCCA will aim to meet the Annual Measurable Objectives for students who are proficient in math or reading as defined by North Carolina's ESEA flexibility request.

Measure: Math and reading proficiency rates by subgroup

Metric: Proficiency rates by subgroup

Target and Rating Categories: These will be defined by North Carolina's ESEA flexibility request.

2. Student Progress Over Time (Growth)

Goal #2: Student progress in reading during the school year as measured by pre - and post-tests

Measure: Student scores on the LEAP pre- and post-tests and Scantron (or other statistically reliable pre- and post-assessment tools)

Metric: Percent of Full Academic Year students (enrolled by October 1 and still enrolled as of May 1) who have taken the LEAP pre- and post-tests (or other statistically reliable pre- and post-assessment tools) who have a measurable learning gain. On the LEAP, this is defined as achieving a score of 75% correct on the LEAP post-test administered within the last month of the school year or showing an increase of 10 percentage points from the LEAP pre-test to the LEAP post-test.

Target and Rating Categories: The annual target is 85% of Full Academic Year students who have taken the pre- and post-tests achieve a measurable learning gain, but the school expects this to be a greater challenge during the initial three-year charter as teachers gain an understanding of the particular needs of the students who have enrolled, and adjust its curriculum, instruction, and interventions to best address those needs.

Goal #3: Student progress in math during the school year as measured by pre- and post-tests.

Measure: Student scores on the LEAP pre- and post-tests and Scantron (or other statistically reliable pre- and post-assessment tools)

Metric: Percent of Full Academic Year students (enrolled by October 1 and still enrolled as of May 1) who have taken the LEAP pre- and post-test (or other statistically reliable pre- and post-assessment tools) who have measurable learning gain. (see LEAP information in previous goal).

Targets and Rating Categories: The annual target is to have 80% of Full Academic Year students who have taken the pre- and post-tests achieve measurable learning gain, but the school expects this to be a greater challenge during the initial three-year charter as teachers gain an understanding of the particular needs of the students who have enrolled, and adjust its curriculum, instruction, and interventions to best address those needs.

3. Student Achievement (Status)

Goal #4: Student reading proficiency as measured by state reading tests

Measure: State-published rates on state proficiency tests for the school as compared to the state average

Metric: The calculation is a ratio of the schools' result to the state average for each tested subject-grade level. Each ratio is capped at 1.00 and a weighted average is computed based on the number of tests taken by students.

Targets and Rating Categories: The target is all official published state test proficiency rates for the school will meet or exceed the state average, for a metric of 1.00. The school expects this to be a greater challenge during the initial three-year charter as teachers gain an understanding of the particular needs of the students who have enrolled, and adjust its curriculum, instruction, and interventions to best address those needs. In Years 2 and 3, the goal will be 0.90 and 0.95 respectively. By Year 4 and beyond, the percentage of students demonstrating proficiency on state reading tests will equal or exceed the statewide average percent of students proficient in each grade level, resulting in a metric of 1.00.

Goal #5: Student reading proficiency as measured by state reading tests

Measure: State-published rates on state proficiency tests for the school as compared to the state average

Metric: The calculation is a ratio of the schools' result to the state average for each tested subject-grade level. Each ratio is capped at 1.00 and a weighted average is computed based on the number of tests taken by students.

Targets and Rating Categories: The target is all official published state test proficiency rates for the school will meet or exceed the state average, for a metric of 1.00. The school expects this to be a greater challenge during the initial three-year charter as teachers gain an understanding of the particular needs of the students who have enrolled, and adjust its curriculum, instruction, and interventions to best address those needs. In

Years 2 and 3, the goal will be 0.80 and 0.85 respectively. By Year 4 and beyond, the percentage of students demonstrating proficiency on state reading tests will equal or exceed the statewide average percent of students proficient in each grade level, resulting in a metric of 1.00.

4. Post-Secondary Readiness

Goal #6: Graduation Rate

Measure: Full Academic Senior Graduation Rate (until complete four year cohort state graduation rates are available)

Metric: The percentage of students in grade 12 enrolled from October 1st to the end of the school year who graduate that same school year

Targets and Rating Categories: The school's percentage of students in grade 12 who graduate will be within 10% of the statewide average in Years 1-5. In Year 5, the school's graduation rate will meet or exceed the statewide average.

5. Mission-Specific Academic Goals

Goal #7: Attendance

Measure: Average Daily Attendance Rate

Metric: Average Daily Attendance Rate

Targets and Rating Categories: During the initial year of operation, the school will achieve an Average Daily Attendance Rate of 93% for students in grades 6-8 and 90% for students in grades 9-12. In Year 2, the school's Attendance Rate will maintain a minimum of 93% for students in grades 6-8 and improve to 92% for students in grades 9-12. The school will meet or exceed these percentages for all subsequent years of operation.

To be promoted to the next grade, students must demonstrate adequate progress in their overall course of student and proficiency on their state tests. Additionally, students will need to successfully complete their language arts and mathematics courses. (Certain students with IEPs may be excluded from this requirement.) A final decision to retain a student due to inadequate progress or lack of proficiency will be made on a case-by-case basis by the principal, parents, and teacher in accordance with North Carolina's promotion regulation.

To graduate and receive a diploma from NCCA, each student must earn a minimum of 24 credits. A student must be enrolled during the semester immediately prior to graduation and earn a minimum of five of the credits (or 10 courses) required for graduation with at least 1.5 of these credits (or three courses) earned at NCCA in the semester immediately prior to graduation.

The school plans to have students with special needs graduate at NCCA in accordance with the terms of their IEPs. NCCA will provide a free and appropriate public education to all students with special needs. When a student with an IEP qualifies to take an alternative state assessment, and thus to receive a certificate of completion in lieu of a diploma, curriculum modifications will be made to provide that student with a free and appropriate public education. NCCA will also develop transition plans for students with IEPs that meet the requirements of state and federal law focusing on student post-high school goals as well as the student's present levels of functioning.

Student Conduct:

*Provide a brief narrative that disseminates how student conduct will be governed at the proposed charter school and how this plan **aligns** with the overall mission and proposed Education Plan of the charter school.*

Provide a draft copy of the student handbook specific to the proposed charter school within the appendices (Appendix D).

Be sure to include:

- 1. Practices the school will use to promote effective discipline.*
- 2. A preliminary list and definitions of the offenses which may result in suspension or expulsion of students.*
- 3. An explanation of how the school will take into account the rights of students with disabilities in regards to these actions that may or must lead to suspension and expulsion.*
- 4. Policies and procedures disseminating due process rights, including grievance procedures, for when a student is suspended or expelled.*

The school will regard academic honesty as key to its mission. All students will be required to sign the honor code indicating the understanding of the expectations of academic honesty. It will be expected that students will adhere to the Honor Code, and that all schoolwork submitted in order to meet course or class requirements represents the original work of the student. Cheating, plagiarizing, or other acts of academic dishonesty are directly counter to the principles of academic excellence and harm most those students who engage in such activities - they cheat themselves of the opportunity to fully develop their intellectual abilities. The Honor Code will serve to reinforce students' commitment to academic excellence, and all students must sign this Honor Code as part of the enrollment process. Students and parents suspected of inappropriate assessment behavior will be confronted immediately and subjected to standard disciplinary action.

As a personalized, high-expectation virtual school, NCCA anticipates being able to effectively manage student discipline issues. In addition, the online curriculum will allow the school to minimize academic interruptions caused by suspensions and expulsions; students will be expected to work regardless of their disciplinary status. The handbook includes a clear and fair code of conduct that complies with the students' due process rights and aligns with the school's mission.

Appropriate conduct will be expected of all students at NCCA. The student's code of conduct will include steps to be followed in the event of misbehavior. NCCA will establish and adopt suspension and expulsion policies that will be distributed in the School Handbook. NCCA's discipline, suspension, and expulsion policies will be in accordance with student's rights and with applicable law.

Reflected in the School Handbook is careful protection of the rights of disabled students through the fair application of due process. School staff may order the removal of a student from school for disciplinary reasons to the extent the removal is applied to non-disabled students, as long as the removals do not constitute a change of placement. A change in placement occurs if the student is removed from school for disciplinary reasons for more than 10 consecutive school days or if the student is subjected to a

series of removals that constitute a pattern of removal.

IV. GOVERNANCE, OPERATIONS and CAPACITY

(No more than ten total pages in this section)

NOTE: Please answer all sections completely. Do not use "same as LEA" or "whatever the law states". Lack of proper documentation could deem the application incomplete.

Governance:

Private Nonprofit Corporation:

*The nonprofit corporation must be officially authorized by the NC Secretary of State by the final approval interview date.

Name of Private Nonprofit: North Carolina for Quality Virtual Educa

Mailing Address: 4 San Marcos Ave, Durham NC 27703

City/State/Zip: Durham NC 27703

Street Address: 4 San Marcos Ave

Phone: 919-638-7056

Fax: 919-287-2639

Name of registered agent and address: Corporation Service Company
327 Hillsborough Street
Raleigh, NC 27603

FEDERAL TAX ID: 45-4339430

Tax-Exempt Status 501 (c)(3)

The private nonprofit listed as the responsible organization for the proposed charter school has received 501 (c)(3) status:

Yes (copy of letter from federal government attached: Appendix E)
X No

NOTE: If the non-profit organization has yet to obtain the 501(c)(3) status, the tax-exempt status must be obtained from the Internal Revenue Service within twenty-four (24) months of the date the Charter Application is given final approval.

Governance and Organizational Structure of Private Non-Profit Organization:

The private nonprofit corporation is the legal entity that has responsibility for all aspects of the proposed charter school. Its members should reflect the ability to operate a charter school from both business and education perspectives.

Please complete the table provided depicting the initial members of the nonprofit organization.

Board Member Name	Board Title	County/State of Residence	Current Occupation
Marcus Green	Board Member	CRAVEN	PhD Candidate &

			Educator
Eric Furman Strother	Board Member	DURHAM	MBA Candidate East Carolina University
Donna Sullivan	Board Secretary	DURHAM	North Carolina Department of Commerce
Russ Jones	Board Member	DURHAM	CTO - Virante
Bryan Setser	Board President	WAKE	Partner at 2Revolutions

Operational Components

1. *Explain where the administrative office(s) of the proposed charter school will be located in North Carolina. Please provide assurances that this office will not be located within a private residence or sectarian institution.*

We have not secured a location for the teaching/learning center (administrative office). However, NCCA has analyzed several locations, including potential shared/joint use facilities, based on criteria needed to support an effective virtual school and we've included information on 23 potential properties located in Raleigh/Cary and Durham (Appendix Q) that could potentially serve as the teaching/learning center. Since a facility will not be needed until the fall of 2014, it is premature to perform a detailed analysis of facilities, as available rental properties will be significantly different in several months. Upon award of the charter, we will secure a facility within the requirements of the charter. A teaching/learning center for a virtual school requires minimal build out which can be accomplished in the time frame needed.

2. *Describe in what format will the non-profit governing board meet. If these meetings occur "virtually", how will the school ensure meaningful public access to comply with North Carolina Open Meetings Law.*

The Governing Board will comply with North Carolina's Open Meeting and Public Meeting Law by ensuring that all meeting days and times are appropriately posted at the school site, on the school's website, and published in any and all applicable ways for public information. Parents and the public will be welcome to attend and may address the Governing Board during the public comment period. The Governing Board may choose to meet telephonically per North Carolina Code of Laws 143-318.13. If a conference call will be held, public conference call information will be provided.

The Governing Board plans to adopt a regular monthly meeting schedule. The public, included but not limited to key stakeholders such as parents, staff, and interested members of the public will be notified through postings at the school site and online, and will be encouraged to attend. The Governing Board plans to meet 10 times per year during the months school is in session.

3. *Explain when the governing board members of the proposed virtual charter school first came together to write the actual application. Include information about the selection process for these individuals and who led the selection process.*

Bryan Setser, Board President, acted as the incorporator in November 2011, when the Governing Board began its pursuit of a charter. His involvement has been continuous since that time. He was involved in the writing of this application for submission. Mr. Setser has continued to gather other interested North Carolinians who want to bring this innovative educational option to students in the

state. These individuals offer qualifications and skills that will result in an independent and effective Governing Board, as illustrated in Appendix G.

4. Provide assurances that these board members have the qualifications, skills and/or experiences to "decide matters related to the operation of the school, including budgeting, curriculum, and operating procedures".

The Governing Board members are parents, educators, and business and community leaders who are committed to bringing a high-quality, highly accountable virtual public school to North Carolina. The Governing Board consists of five members. Each Governing Board member brings unique skills and expertise to support NCCA and make decisions regarding the operation of the school, including budgeting, curriculum, and operating procedures. NCCA will be a statewide school and as such the Governing Board members have community ties across the state. There is a wide range of expertise on the Governing Board demonstrating the capacity for initial start-up operations and the successful launch of the school for fall of 2015.

5. Describe when and how this governing board will evaluate the virtual charter school vendor to gauge progress with meeting the terms of the charter. Specifically address the protocol for the governing board decision to change vendors without significant disruption to the charter school's operations.

As outlined in the draft Professional Services Agreement provided in Appendix L the Governing Board is independent from Connections and has complete legal, fiduciary, and oversight authority of NCCA. The Governing Board is responsible for the contractual relationship with Connections. The Governing Board will regularly review services received from Connections. Connections will be responsible for reporting to the Governing Board and will be answerable to the Governing Board. Furthermore, the Governing Board expects to conduct an annual review of Connections. The design, performance criteria, and the methodology will be developed by the Governing Board in consultation with Board Counsel.

The Governing Board has the right to terminate its contract with Connections if it does not meet its performance obligations and is unable to cure such deficiency after being given reasonable notice. The draft Professional Services Agreement describes in detail the terms of termination and states that it is clearly the prerogative and discretion of the Governing Board. After considerable review and negotiation by the Governing Board and Board Counsel, it is anticipated that a Professional Services Agreement will be approved for execution.

6. Share the level of involvement by the governing board in drafting the management agreement with the proposed vendor. Did the board have the authority to add or change the documents (i.e. specifically setting the goals by which the vendor would be held accountable)? Were there any changes based on the board negotiations? If so, please explain.

The Governing Board is actively involved in negotiating the Professional Services Agreement, as provided in Appendix L. Once the charter is approved, the Governing Board will engage legal counsel to assist with negotiating, finalizing, and executing a Professional Services Agreement (the management agreement).

Please provide the following in this location of the APPLICATION:

1. A description of the governance structure of the proposed charter school, including the governing board's functions, primary duties, roles and responsibilities as it relates to overseeing the charter school. Include how the board will recruit, hire, and supervise the lead administrator.

The Governing Board sets policy and hires contractors, including those providing curriculum, technology, and instructional services. Additionally, the Governing Board will be responsible for assuring that all aspects of the financial and programmatic accountability systems fulfill the charter agreement. The Governing Board will:

- * Protect the legal interests of the school and set policy
- * Set the vision/mission of the school and govern its operations
- * Exercise sound legal and ethical practices and policies. The Governing Board will ensure that the school adheres to the same health, safety, civil rights, and disability rights requirements as are applied to all public schools operating in North Carolina.
- * Manage liabilities wisely and ensure adequate resources and manage them effectively
- * Advocate good external relations with the community, school districts, media, neighbors, parents, and students
- * Negotiate service agreements and hold contractors accountable for performance under such agreements
- * Comply with state and federal reporting requirements
- * Practice strategic planning and assess the organization's performance

The Governing Board also provides a venue for parental involvement. The Governing Board may create ad hoc parent/Learning Coach advisory groups to provide guidance on particular subjects such as community partnerships and neighborhood outreach. All Governing Board minutes will be made available to families on request. Governing Board activities will be reported in the school newsletter.

Upon approval of the charter, the founding members may recruit additional members to form a diverse and well balanced Governing Board. The Governing Board will be authorized by the State Board of Education to govern the school.

"Effective boards recruit and supervise a lead administrator who can meet the school's missions and develop and define the roadmap for academic rigor."

(<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/charterschools/best/governance.pdf>)

NCCA's instructional leader will be the principal, who is selected and employed by the Governing Board. The principal will build consensus and inspire teachers to teach, students to learn, and parents to engage in their child's learning while following the mission of the school. The principal is responsible for the overall school operation working with parents, students, support staff, and teachers who teach and virtually facilitate the student instructional program.

The Governing Board plans to partner with Connections via the Professional Services Agreement to provide human resource services, including recruiting, to ensure NCCA is staffed by well-trained and effective online learning professionals. It is anticipated that the recruiting of the principal will begin immediately upon charter approval, as the principal needs to be hired prior to recruiting teachers and staff. The search process will include a job posting, advertising for the position through multiple avenues, screening candidates, and identifying the top candidates for the Governing Board's consideration. Ideally, the Governing Board anticipates hiring a candidate by April of 2015.

Daily management of the school will be the principal's responsibility while overall governance will be the responsibility of the Governing Board. The Governing Board will annually evaluate the principal based upon North Carolina law. Annual performance will be based upon meeting school goals, staff evaluations, and input from Connections based upon their experience interacting with the principal and supporting other successful virtual school programs nationwide. The Governing Board will adopt pay scales, performance criteria, a performance appraisal system, and disciplinary procedures for all employees consistent with North Carolina law.

- 2. Describe the size, current and desired composition, powers, and duties of the governing board. Identify key skills, areas of expertise, and constituencies that will be represented on the governing board. Explain how this governance structure and composition will help ensure that a) the school will be an educational and operational success; b) the board will evaluate the success of the school and school leader; and c) there will be active and effective representation of key stakeholders, including parents.*

The Governing Board will be comprised of no fewer than five and no more than nine voting members serving staggered terms of one, two, or three years. No member of the Governing Board will be an employee or independent contractor or otherwise be compensated by NCCA except as specifically allowed by the conflict of interest provisions set forth in applicable North Carolina and federal law. Furthermore, no Governing Board member will be employed by the proposed educational services provider.

The officers of the corporation include a President, Treasurer, and Secretary. The Governing Board members are parents, educators, and business and community leaders who are committed to bringing a high quality, highly accountable virtual public school for students in grades 6-12 to North Carolina. Current Governing Board members have unique skills and expertise in online education, technology, internal controls, and financial analysis. Additionally, at least one NCCA parent will be recruited to join the Governing Board. These qualifications will help ensure the success of the school and the effective representation of key stakeholders.

- 3. Explain the procedure by which the founding board members have been recruited and selected. If a position is vacant, how and on what timeline will new members be recruited and added to the board?*

The Governing Board will recruit additional members as necessary to form a diverse and well balanced Governing Board. Any member of the greater North Carolina community may seek appointment to the Governing Board, with the exception of employees of NCCA, or its educational services provider, and any person who has been convicted of a felony.

The Governing Board will also provide a venue for parental involvement. The Governing Board may create ad hoc parent/Learning Coach advisory groups to provide guidance on particular subjects such as community partnerships and neighborhood outreach. Parents who are not members of the Governing Board are also encouraged to be involved with the Governing Board's activities. All Governing Board minutes will be made available upon request. Governing Board activities will be reported on in the school newsletter.

- 4. Outline below the strategic board calendar detailing how often the board will meet according to the bylaws established.*

The Board will meeting monthly. Special meetings may be called as necessary.

- 5. What kinds of orientation or training will new board members receive, and what kinds of ongoing*

professional development will existing board members receive? The plan for training and development should include a timetable, specific topics to be addressed, and requirements for participation (Board Policies Draft: Appendix J).

Members of the Governing Board have had the opportunity to attend national conferences such as iNACOL and the National Charter School Conference as well as other training sessions conducted by Greater Capacity Consortium and Above Board Training. Training topics included charter school basics, non-profit management, conflict of interest, budgeting and financial oversight, effective meetings, policy development, and human resources oversight. In addition, Governing Board members have participated in national conferences to network with other charter school board members and further their development as effective board members. Along with training, the Governing Board has attended several state meetings in preparation for the submission of the charter application. When the school is approved, the Governing Board expects to attend further trainings and meetings as may be appropriate to governing the school.

6. Describe the board's ethical standards and procedures for identifying and addressing conflicts of interest. Identify any existing relationships that could pose actual or perceived conflicts if the application is approved; discuss specific steps that the board will take to avoid any actual conflicts and to mitigate perceived conflicts.

The Governing Board will adhere to all applicable laws for non-profit public benefit corporations operating a charter school, including but not limited to the laws regarding interested parties and conflicts of interest. In addition, the Governing Board has adopted a Conflict of Interest policy which requires annual completion of a Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statement. The Governing Board will seek to avoid any conflicts, expressed or implied, by thoroughly vetting Board member candidates. Furthermore, when a potential conflict is brought to its attention, the Governing Board will seek guidance from Board Counsel and any and all other appropriate authorities to establish the necessary steps concerning the actual or perceived conflict of interest.

7. Explain the decision-making processes the board will use to develop school policies.

The operating structure will be similar to a traditional educational environment, with a principal, selected by the Governing Board, who will supervise administrative staff and teachers who will teach students and implement the curriculum. The need for new policies may be suggested by parents, the school staff, or others, but developing policies will be the responsibility of the Governing Board with advice from Board Counsel. The Governing Board will be well informed and routinely receive training regarding Charter School Law, State Board Policy, and operating policies established by the State Board of Education and implemented by the Department of Public Instruction. Using this knowledge will enable the Governing Board to make appropriate policy decisions that will affect the operation of the school and the school and work environment for students and staff.

8. Describe any advisory bodies, councils, or associations listed in the organization chart or to be formed, including the roles and duties of that body, and the reporting structure as it relates to the school's governing body and leadership.

Not applicable. There are not currently any advisory boards or councils for the organization.

9. Discuss the school's grievance process for parents and staff members.

Parent Grievance Resolution Process - These responsibilities will be set out in the Parent/Legal Caretaker Agreement (PLCA) and the school handbook and

include: contacting families regularly, delivering educational materials and equipment, and providing accessible support. NCCA will also ensure the family and student adhere to their responsibilities as stated in the PLCA and the school handbook and if necessary will discipline for violation of policy. If a parent has concerns, he/she may institute the grievance process outlined in the handbook.

1. A parent with a grievance must, in writing, report the dissatisfaction, and submit it to the student's teacher (or other appropriate NCCA staff member as necessary). All parties involved must be appropriately defined and the problem must be clearly outlined.

2. The recipient of the grievance (generally the teacher) must review the issue with his/her supervisor (generally the principal) and respond to the parent within three school days.

3. If the original recipient did not resolve the grievance, the parent should request a meeting with the recipient's supervisor. The supervisor should investigate the matter, and schedule a meeting with the parent, the student, if necessary, and any other staff members (if necessary), within five school days.

4. If either party does not resolve this grievance, the parent should then request a meeting with the school administration. School administration will investigate the matter and schedule a meeting within five school days.

5. If a resolution was not reached at the three meetings, the parent may request a meeting with the parent member of the Governing Board, who will investigate the matter, and arrange a meeting within five school days.

Employee Grievance Resolution Process - The Governing Board encourages open and direct lines of communication between employees at all levels of the organization. It benefits everyone when employees feel free to bring questions, suggestions, and concerns directly to their managers. The resolution process includes concerns about the application of school policies and procedures within the school to school staff, parents, and students; concerns about personnel decisions directly involving an individual or decisions affecting other individuals at the school; work conditions; questions about the competence and overall fitness of a colleague or supervisor; and regulatory compliance.

1. If the issue does not involve a violation of school policy or an ethical or regulatory requirement, the employee should meet with at least two levels of administration. An employee must, in good faith, make every attempt to resolve the issue with his/her immediate supervisor and, if that is not successful, then with his/her next level supervisor, which will generally be the principal. Fear of retaliation, which is prohibited, is not a legitimate reason to skip this step. If the issue does involve a violation of school policy or regulatory or ethical requirement, then the employee should proceed directly to step 2.

2. Put the Issue in Writing. If the immediate supervisor or the next level supervisor cannot resolve the issue, or if the issue involves a violation of school policy or an ethical or regulatory requirement, the employee should

put the issue in writing. It is important to describe the issue, the desired result, and the proposed solution to the issue. This step should occur as soon as possible and in no event more than 20 business days after the occurrence of the problem.

3. If the issue relates to a personnel matter or work condition, contact the Governing Board. After an employee fully describes the issue in writing, the Governing Board will help the employee and supervisor consider how policies, procedures, and practices relate for the issue.

Governance and Organizational Structure of Private Non-Profit Organization (continued)

Include in the Appendices:

1. A well-defined organizational chart showing the relationship of the Board of Directors to the parents and staff of the proposed charter school. This chart should also include lines of authority to and from any outside entity that will play a role in managing or supporting the charter school (such as educational service providers, advisory bodies or parent/teacher councils). (Appendix F)
2. A one-page resume from each founding board member and responses to the questions found on the Charter School Board Member Form (Appendix G).
3. The proposed by-laws, which must include a Conflict of Interest Policy for board members and a stated commitment to the NC Open Meetings Law (Appendix H).
4. A copy of the articles of incorporation, if available. If not available, this document must be available prior to interview by SBE, the applicant must demonstrate that it has been applied for prior to submission of the proposed application. (Appendix I)
5. Copy of any board policies if adopted already (Appendix J).
6. Copies of meeting minutes (if available), relevant to the development of the charter school plan, during the application process (Appendix K).

Proposed Management Organization (Educational Management Organization or Charter Management Organization)

If the proposed school does not intend to contract with an education service provider, mark "Not Applicable" and follow the direction #3 in the Application Specifications.

Not Applicable

If the Charter School plans to contract for services with an educational management organization (EMO) or charter management organization (CMO), please specify the contact information below.

Name of the Company: Connections Academy of North Carolina LLC
Address: 1001 Fleet Street, 5th Floor
Baltimore MD 21202
Website: <http://www.connectionsacademy.com>
Phone Number: 443-212-1934
Contact Person: Jay W. Ragley, Senior Director, State Relations
Fax: 443-529-1200
Email: jragley@connectionseducation.com

1. *Explain how the contract with the specified EMO or CMO will be in the best educational and financial interest of the charter school. Please include a copy of the proposed management*

agreement as Appendix L of the specified EMO or CMO.

The school anticipates engaging Connections Academy of North Carolina LLC, an affiliate of Connections Education LLC, for curriculum, technology and other support services in compliance with North Carolina statutes. The Governing Board will maintain responsibility for ensuring NCCA meets all educational, fiscal, and programmatic goals outlined in the charter. The Governing Board will regularly review the services and will set expectations for reporting. Under the Professional Services Agreement, Connections will be subject to a performance review, conducted at the Governing Board's discretion. The Governing Board is responsible for determining the appropriate services for the school and ensuring the performance of Connections with its obligations under the Professional Services Agreement as well as ensuring compliance with North Carolina statutes. A copy of the proposed professional service agreement is in Appendix L of this application.

Connections is dedicated to providing high quality professional educational services to children of all backgrounds. Connections can leverage its significant resources to the benefit of the school. This partnership will create a school that is setting new standards of excellence in the virtual school arena. The curriculum brings together the best-of-class materials from leading education publishers and other content providers. With proprietary interactive web tools, online lesson plans and instruction, internal email, and secure community message boards, Connections' advanced technology allows a quality public education to be delivered straight into a student's home or other location. The curriculum allows for parent, student, and teacher input through a five-star rating system that allows for continuous school improvement.

2. *What other EMO/CMOs were pursued and why did the applicant select this particular one?*

Please include information regarding other management organization's fees and financial/academic records that led to the selection of the proposed EMO/CMO as the best fit for this proposed school.

The Governing Board conducted due diligence in evaluating the need for an Education Service Provider. The Governing Board selected Connections for their solid national reputation working with charter schools, school districts and state departments of education across the country. The Governing Board was also impressed with Connections' fiscal responsibility and experience developing fiscally-responsible and sustainable best practices.

While at NCVPS, Bryan Setser, Board President, worked with multiple vendors. He has spent the past three years researching potential partners. His most positive interactions were with Connections based on their responsiveness and ability to provide information and data upon request. The Governing Board compared academic performance, educational programs, management teams, parent satisfaction results, corporate growth and culture, national reputations, and other factors in looking at the feasibility of partnering with each vendor. Each Governing Board member had the opportunity to provide other Governing Board members with his/her independent findings throughout the process before the Governing Board made a unified decision.

Connections has a proven record of success in collaborating with public virtual schools, consistent strong ratings from parents, proven acceptance

of students to highly regarded colleges and universities, positive relationships with strong governing boards, and passionate testimonials from families about their successful experiences. Connections will be a critical partner in achieving the school's mission of providing parents a choice for their children in grades 6-12 throughout the state who need an alternative to the traditional public school classroom to maximize their full potential.

3. *Provide and discuss student performance, governance performance and financial data from other schools managed by the management company to demonstrate how this organization is a good fit for the targeted student population. Nationally, what is the highest and lowest performing school of the EMO/CMO? Why are these two schools so different in overall achievement?*

School Ratings:

* Capistrano Connections Academy (CapoCA) improved its statewide API rating from 2011-2012 to 2012-2103. Academic Performance Rating is a cross-sectional look at the student achievement based on an improvement model using assessment results from one year that are compared to assessment results from the prior year to measure improvement. Each school has an annual target, and all numerically significant student groups at a school also have targets. The API requires student group accountability to address the achievement gaps that exist between traditionally higher- and lower-scoring student groups.

* California Connections Academy @ Ripon (CalCAR) scored over an 800 on statewide API rating in the first year of operation (2012-2013) exceeding California's target of 800.

* Idaho INSPIRE outperformed all other state virtual charter schools.

* Oregon Connections Academy (ORCA) received a level 4 rating for growth (2nd highest rating) and outperformed all other virtual schools in the state and outperformed the state average in reading and writing.

* Texas Connections Academy @ Houston (TCAH) was the only virtual school in Texas with a state rating of "Met Standard." TCAH is the only virtual school in Texas with a Distinction Earned for academic performance in any area (English Language Arts).

* Wisconsin Connections Academy (WCA) made AYP every year from 2005-2006 through 2010-2011 (not rated in 2011-2012). For the 2012-2013 school year, WCA received a rating of Exceeds Expectations (4th highest out of 5 possible ratings).

2012-2013 State Results Highlights (as of 10/30/13)

Math

* Florida Connections Academy (full time K-8) students exceed or were equivalent to public school students statewide at all middle school grades.

* TCAH exceeded statewide performance in 7th grade math.

Reading

* Arizona Connections Academy (ACA) students exceeded or were equivalent to public school students statewide at 6 out of 7 tested grade levels.

* CapoCA students exceeded or were equivalent to public school students statewide at 9 out of 10 tested grade levels (Grades 2-11).

* Florida Virtual School Full Time (Connections is a provider for K-8) students exceeded or were equivalent to public school students statewide at all tested grade levels.

* Indiana Connections Academy (INCA) students exceeded or were equivalent to public school students statewide at 6 out of 7 tested grade levels.

* Ohio Connections Academy (OCA) students exceeded the Ohio state standard

(75.0% proficiency) at 6 out of 7 tested grade levels.

* South Carolina Connections Academy (SCCA) students exceeded or were equivalent to public school students statewide at 6 out of 7 tested grade levels.

* TCAH students exceeded or were equivalent to public school students statewide at all tested grade levels (3-8)

Compared to 2011-2012

Math

* Georgia Connections Academy (GACA) improved performance at 5 out of 6 grade levels (3-8)

* Florida Virtual School Full-Time (Connections is a provider for K-8) improved performance at each of grades 6, 7, and 8.

* TCAH improved performance in 5 out of 6 tested grade levels (3-8).

Classifying a school as having high or low performance requires additional direction on the parameters of the measurement. Students in their schools take different state proficiency tests and are graded on different sales and measures. Accurately analyzing a school requires considering multiple variables (results of state proficiency assessments, academic performance, cultural and social environment, parent and student feedback, etc.). These variables and the weight or importance of each variable changes from state to state. Since most schools supported by Connections are statewide virtual schools, it is difficult to compare schools to each other.

4. *Describe how the governance structure will be affected; if at all, by the EMO/CMO and particularly discuss how the board of directors of the charter school will govern the school independently of the EMO/CMO.*

In accordance with and as set forth in the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws, the Governing Board will hold the charter and will be responsible for governing NCCA. Employees of NCCA or Connections will not serve on the Governing Board.

The Governing Board will govern independently of Connections and maintain responsibility for ensuring that the school meets all educational, fiscal, and programmatic goals outlined in the charter. The Governing Board will decide all matters related to the operation of the school, including budgeting, curriculum, and operating procedures. The principal will run the day-to-day operations.

The Governing Board will employ all school personnel and will make all decisions in employment matters, following the school's employee handbook, which the Governing Board will review, revise, and approve. The Governing Board may choose to contract with Connections to provide human resources and payroll services, including background checks required by law and regulations.

The Governing Board will ensure that the school adheres to health, safety, civil rights, and disability rights requirements. The Governing Board will also be responsible for ensuring that the public as well as students, parents, and employees have the ability to communicate appropriately with the Governing Board in keeping with state law and regulation.

The Governing Board is an entity completely independent from Connections.

Upon filing of a Form 1023 Application for 501(c)3 status, the IRS began a rigorous review of the organization in order to make the decision to award tax exempt status to the charter school corporation. NCCA is not related to nor is it a part of a holding company system; it is a non-profit entity controlled and governed by the Governing Board that does not include, and will never include, an employee or former employee of Connections. By conferring this status to the school, the IRS will further validate the independence of the corporation.

5. *Provide a description of the relationship that will exist between the charter school employees and the Management Organization.*

The operating structure will be similar to a traditional educational environment, with a principal, approved and employed by the Governing Board, who will supervise administrative staff and teachers who teach students and implement the curriculum according to policies and procedures. The Governing Board will employ all school personnel. The Governing Board may choose to contract with Connections for human resources and payroll services.

6. *Explain how the contract includes measurable objectives whereby the charter school board can evaluate annually the performance of the EMO/CMO; and if necessary, terminate the contract without significant obstacles.*

The Governing Board has the right to terminate the contract with Connections if Connections does not meet its performance obligations and is unable to cure such deficiency after being given reasonable notice. The Professional Services Agreement describes in detail the terms of the termination and states that it is clearly the prerogative and discretion of the Governing Board. After considerable review and negotiation by the Governing Board and Board Counsel, it is anticipated that a Professional Services Agreement will be approved for execution.

The Governing Board manages the school and maintains all oversight and accountability responsibilities. The Governing Board employs the school principal and staff. The Governing Board is fully in charge of the contractual relationship with Connections. The Governing Board will be responsible for the management and oversight of Connections. The Governing Board will regularly review services and will set expectations for reporting. Connections is subject to a performance review, conducted at the Governing Board's discretion. The design, performance criteria, and the methodology will be developed by the Governing Board in consultation with Connections, where appropriate, and Board Counsel.

Measurable objectives will be set whereas the Governing Board will evaluate Connections. On an annual basis, the Governing Board plans to conduct an evaluation of Connections through the engagement of a third party vendor, Greater Capacity Consortium. The evaluation will include a review of Connections in the following areas: Educational Program, Technology, School Support Services, and Board Support Services at a minimum.

7. *Is the facility provided by the EMO/CMO? N*

8. *List the fund balance and surpluses for each school managed by the EMO/CMO over the last three years in North Carolina.*

Connections has no contractual relationships with schools in North Carolina. Therefore, this question is not applicable.

Private School Conversions: complete ONLY if the proposed charter is a private school conversion.

Otherwise, mark "Not Applicable" and follow the direction #3 in the Application Specifications.

X Not Applicable

Applicable" and follow the direction #3 in the Application Specifications. Understand that the replication means that a new charter school will be governed separately from the charter school the application is modeled after.

X Not Applicable

Virtual Historical Context

1. *The virtual school vendor must discuss its academic and financial track record exclusively within the charter school sector. Supplemental services and partnerships with district schools should not be a part of this consideration.*

During its 10+ years of operation, Connections has developed its own methods of online teaching that have enabled them to produce the highest academic performance of any family of K-12 virtual schools in the country. In looking at state standardized tests, students attending statewide virtual schools supported by Connections tend to perform about their state averages in reading and on par in science (based on the percentage of schools operated making Adequate Yearly Progress -AYP, state report card ratings, and the overall percentage of enrolled students in the program rated as proficient or above on state standardized tests). All results are those publicly reported by the states on their standardized tests, not based on any measures of Connections.

* Capistrano Connections Academy (CapoCA) improved its statewide API rating from 2011-2012 to 2012-2103. Academic Performance Rating is a cross-sectional look at the student achievement based on an improvement model using assessment results from one year that are compared to assessment results from the prior year to measure improvement. Each school has an annual target, and all numerically significant student groups at a school also have targets. The API requires student group accountability to address the achievement gaps that exist between traditionally higher- and lower-scoring student groups.

* California Connections Academy @ Ripon (CalCAR) scored over an 800 on statewide API rating in the first year of operation (2012-2013) exceeding California's target of 800.

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* Texas Connections Academy @ Houston (TCAH) was the only virtual school in Texas with a state rating of "Met Standard." TCAH is the only virtual school in Texas with a Distinction Earned for academic performance in any area (English Language Arts).

* Wisconsin Connections Academy (WCA) made AYP every year from 2005-2006 through 2010-2011 (not rated in 2011-2012). For the 2012-2013 school year, WCA received a rating of Exceeds Expectations (4th highest out of 5 possible ratings).

Schools supported by Connections and their governing bodies are provided with detailed data concerning student performance on state standardized tests for each year and over time. The increasing popularity of virtual education presents a challenge since new students generally enter behind in their academic performance, and new students represent a significant portion

of the overall population. To rely exclusively on proficiency data rather than student growth data in some ways understates a schools' accomplishments.

Each year, a third-party survey of parents with students enrolled in a school supported by Connections is conducted. Year after year parents express their satisfaction. This past year alone, more than 47.9% of families participated in the survey. Results from the 2012-2013 school year include:

- * 90.1% gave the overall online school program an "A" or "B" grade
- * 92.4% recommend the school to other parents
- * 90.7% reported that their children are making good academic progress
- * 95.4% said they were pleased with the helpfulness of their child's teachers and specifically praised their responsiveness and accessibility
- * 95.8% consider the curriculum high quality
- * 94.0% agree that technology tools improve their child's learning experience

2. *Offer an explanation as to whether the virtual charter school vendor is a for-profit or non-profit entity. A financial history of the vendor should be included in this section. The management agreement with all fees clearly provided should be attached as Appendix L.*

Connections Education (formerly known as Connections Academy) is a for-profit entity and was an independent company formed in October 2001 to serve schools and students in the emerging K-12 virtual school market. The company has operated in a fiscally-sound manner throughout its history and was able to self-fund its investments in its curriculum, technology, and operations after receiving its initial funding from its founders. In November 2011, the company was acquired by Pearson Education, Inc., a subsidiary of the public company Pearson PLC. As a public company, their financial statements are available online. Being a part of Pearson not only brings Connections and incredible source of curriculum and instruction products and services, it also provides Connections with the financial resources to support its growth and that of the schools and students it serves.

The Governing Board has reviewed the standard fee schedule from Connections but has yet to engage in negotiations with this vendor to finalize the specific services it will provide and the exact rates it will charge, so a schedule of negotiated feeds is not available at this time. The Governing Board is confident that the budget information contained in the application has been prepared in a conservative fashion and incorporates the expected expense for all products and services necessary to operate a high quality virtual school.

3. *Discuss the academic and financial performance data of two virtual charter schools (from two different states) that are run by this particular vendor. This review must include a comparison of these virtual schools against district and charter schools performance on their state's chosen assessments. Further, a comparison of student demographics, teacher to student ratios, and staff/student turnover rates must also be incorporated into this analysis.*

We include publically reported state test results for 2011-2012 for Oregon Connections Academy (ORCA) and South Carolina Connections Academy (SCCA) compared to statewide reported results for all public schools in those states and to results from another comparable virtual charter program.

In these states, students are tested in math, reading, science, and writing. In reading, ORCA either exceeded or was equivalent to statewide performance

at all grade levels tested. SCCA had a similar level of performance for English language arts with the exception of grade 3 which trailed statewide performance (although grade 3 performance for SCCA improved from 2010-2011). In math, ORCA outperformed statewide (i.e., all public schools combined) test performance in grade 6, and was equivalent to statewide performances in grades 4,5, and 11. SCCA trailed the statewide performance in math at all tested grade levels (3-8 and 2nd year high school students). SCCA did improve math performance from 2010-2011 levels in grades 3, 4, 6, 7, and for 2nd year high school students.

In science, ORCA exceeded or was equivalent to statewide performance at all tested grade levels (5, 8, 11), and SCCA was equivalent to statewide performance in two out of six tested grade levels (3 and 5). SCCA improved performance from 2010-2011 in five out of those six grade levels. Oregon tested writing at the grade 11 level and ORCA's performance was within three percentage points of the statewide performance; SCCA matched the statewide level of performance in grade 8 writing, but trailed in grade 5.

Finding a comparable charter school to virtual schools that enroll students on a statewide basis is problematic. Schools supported by Connections can be directly compared however to virtual charter schools run by k12, Inc.(R) In Oregon and South Carolina, these are Oregon Virtual Academy (OVA) and South Carolina Virtual Charter School (SCVCS). In Oregon, ORCA exceeded ORVA's performance in all tested grade levels in reading, math, and science (ORVA was not tested in writing) with the exception of grade 3 reading where performance was comparable. In South Carolina, SCCA exceeded SCVCS in in English language arts at grades 5, 6, and 7; math at grades 6 and 7; in Science at grades 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7; and in writing at grade 5. All other grade levels showed equivalent levels of performance with the exception of grade 3 in English language arts.

In both ORCA and SCCA, approximately 48% of tested students were eligible for free and reduced meal assistance and about 11% were on an IEP. At ORCA, about 20% of students were members of minority groups and about 23% of SCCA students were members of minority groups.

Student turnover was measured through withdrawal rate for students enrolled as of 10/1/11. In both ORCA and SCCA, this population consisted of approximately 2,800 students and at both schools about 77% of these students remained enrolled through the last day of school.

Out of all students enrolled on the last day of school, approximately 75% of ORCA and SCCA students re-enrolled for the 2012-2013 school year.

For the 2011-2012 school year, ORCA had a teacher turnover rate (voluntary terminations) of 5.5% and SCCA had a rate of 7%.

Both schools have operated in a fiscally prudent manner such that funding received exceed expenditures incurred. In addition, ORCA has undergone seven independent annual financial audits and SCCA has undergone four independent annual financial audits with both receiving unqualified audit opinions every time. An unqualified audit opinion is the highest opinion that can be received from an independent accounting firm.

4. *Name the highest and lowest performing virtual charter schools in this vendor's total portfolio.*

Analyze why those schools are performing at their specified levels on the state assessments. Include strategies or steps taken to either improve or sustain academic levels.

Classifying a school as having high or low performance requires additional direction on the parameters of the measurement. Students in their schools take different state proficiency tests and are graded on different sales and measures. Accurately analyzing a school requires considering multiple variables (results of state proficiency assessments, academic performance, cultural and social environment, parent and student feedback, etc.). These variables and the weight or importance of each variable changes from state to state. Since most schools supported by Connections are statewide virtual schools, it is difficult to compare schools to each other.

- 5. The applicant must discuss, in depth, why this particular vendor was selected. Include a list of what other vendors were considered, the academic data examined by the applicant, sample management fees from other potential vendors, summaries of the governing board discussions.*

The Governing Board conducted due diligence in evaluating the need for an Education Service Provider. The Governing Board considered other vendors, namely K12 and Edison/Provost, but felt that with Connections' proven record of success it was the best fit. The Governing Board selected Connections for their solid national reputation working with charter schools, school districts, and state departments of education across the country. The Governing Board was also impressed with Connections' fiscal responsibility and experience developing fiscally-responsible and sustainable best practices. Most impressive was the performance of schools supported by Connections when compared to the schools supported by k12, Inc.

Schools supported by Connections' reported state test results for 2011-2012 are compared to k12 reported results in states across the country in the areas of reading/language arts, math, science, and writing. Particular grade levels for Connections were counted as "exceeding" if they were at least five percentage points greater than the corresponding k12 percentage for that grade level. Connections grades were counted as "behind" if they were at least five percentage points less than the corresponding k12 value. Connections grades that were within (plus or minus) five percentage points of the k12 value were counted as "equivalent."

Reading/language arts

- * Connections exceeded k12 in Arizona in grades 4, 6, and 10; was equivalent in grades 3, 5, 7, and 8; and was not behind in any grade.
- * In Colorado, Connections exceeded k12 in grades 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10; was equivalent in grades 3 and 9; and was not behind in any grade.
- * In Nevada, Connections exceeded k12 in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 11; and was not equivalent or behind in any grade.
- * In Oregon, Connections exceeded k12 in grades 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8; was equivalent in grade 3; and was not behind in any grade.
- * In Pennsylvania, Connections exceeded k12 in grades 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 11; and was not equivalent or behind in any grade.
- * In South Carolina, Connections exceeded k12 in grades 5, 6, and 7; was equivalent in grades 4, 8, and 10; and was behind in grade 3.
- * Overall, in comparison across 13 states in reading/language arts, Connections exceeded k12 in 59 grades, was equivalent in 27 grades, and was behind in 8 grades.

Math

- * Connections exceeded k12 in Colorado in grades 4, 7, 8, and 10; was equivalent in grades 3, 5, 6, and 9; and was not behind in any grade.
- * In Idaho, Connections exceeded k12 in grade 7; was equivalent in grades 4, 5, 6, 8, and 10; and was behind in grade 3.
- * In Indiana, Connections exceeded k12 in grades 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8; was equivalent in grade 5; and was not behind in any grade.
- * In Nevada, Connections exceeded k12 in grades 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 11; was equivalent in grade 4; and was not behind in any grade.
- * In Oregon, Connections exceeded k12 in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 11; and was not equivalent or behind in any grade.
- * In South Carolina, Connections exceeded k12 in grades 6 and 7; was equivalent in grades 3, 4, 5, 8, and 10; and was not behind in any grade.
- * Overall, in comparison across 13 states in math, Connections exceeded k12 in 50 grades, was equivalent in 35 grades, and was behind in 7 grades.

Projected Staff:

Provide, as Appendix M, a list of positions anticipated for the charter school; (e.g., principal or director; finance officer, administrative support staff; teachers (part-time and full-time); paraprofessionals/teaching assistants, clerical, and maintenance.). Be mindful that your predicted administration and staff match the projected enrollment noted in Section I, course offerings and align with the proposed budget.

Staffing Plans, Hiring, and Management

Include the following information for the proposed charter school:

1. *Explain the board's strategy for recruiting and retaining high-performing teachers. List the qualifications needed for the staff to deliver online instruction and how the school will ensure staff meets these requirements.*

Virtual learning requires an additional skill set and professional development for educators. The Governing Board will focus on individualizing education for students and a high level of comfort with technology as part of the interview process for job candidates. Qualifications for teachers will include North Carolina certification and a passion for innovation in teaching. In partnering with Connections, high-quality teachers knowledgeable in their content areas will be attracted to join the team. Connections' professional development will provide teachers with the necessary skills and pedagogy to teach online and maximize their skill set statewide.

2. *Provide a description of the relationship that will exist between the charter school employees and the nonprofit board. Provide as Appendix L, a draft of the employment policies to be implemented by the proposed charter school.*

The operating structure of NCCA will be similar to a traditional educational environment, with a principal, employed by the Governing Board, who will supervise administrative staff and teachers who teach students and implement the curriculum according to the policies and procedures set by the Governing Board. The principal will be responsible for implementing Governing Board policies in the day-to-day operation of the school and will act in an advisory capacity to the Governing Board. The need for new policies may be suggested by parents, the school staff, or others, but development of those policies will be the responsibility of the Governing Board with advice from

its independent counsel.

NCCA will offer a work environment that provides opportunities for each employee to maximize his or her potential and meet the highest performance standards. Incorporated in this mission are the organization's core values. A draft of employment policies is included in Appendix N.

3. *What is the highest teacher to student ratio that this proposed virtual charter school will accept? Why was that figure selected and how are you sure this ratio will not compromise the academic offerings of the proposed charter school?*

Virtual learning allows for a flexible staffing plan that can expand with the enrollment of the school and is not limited by facility space. Since classroom management, lesson plan development, and scheduling issues are minimized in a virtual classroom, slightly higher class ratios than a face-to-face classroom are warranted. The school will be staffed with an anticipated student-to-teacher ratio of 30:1.

4. *Outline the board's procedures for hiring and dismissing school personnel, including conducting criminal background checks.*

NCCA will develop personnel policies and procedures regarding the hiring and terminating of employees as well as the use of criminal background checks for applicants and employees. Offers of employment are contingent upon satisfactory reference and background checks as well as receipt of valid certification documents and fingerprint clearances as required or any other approvals as listed in the offer letter. NCCA reserves the right to conduct additional background checks periodically during employment. Employment may be denied or terminated if NCCA believes the result of any of the background checks performed would affect an individual's ability to do his or her job and/or the safety of the students or the school.

If it is found after employment begins that any information provided on the application was false or misleading, or that information could be detrimental to the school was withheld during the interview and/or hiring process, employment may be terminated.

Employees who are arrested for or convicted of a felony or misdemeanor offense must immediately, within one business day of returning to work after the arrest or conviction, notify the principal as this could directly impact his/her ability to perform his/her job, or could have a negative impact on the school. Employees that have been arrested for or convicted of a felony or misdemeanor during employment that impacts his/her ability to perform his/her job, or has a negative impact on the school, may receive disciplinary action. up to and including termination.

5. *Outline the school's proposed salary range and employment benefits for all levels of employment.*

For teaching positions, a salary range will be determined based on research of market compensation and financial considerations at the time of posting. After the initial hire, compensation increases and incentives are based on performance. The budget provides estimated salaries by position. Teachers may receive an annual salary increase based on performance ratings. Teachers can apply for career ladder opportunities and assume additional responsibilities in order to earn additional compensation (Coordinator Teacher - base plus 4%, Lead Teacher - base plus 9%, Master Teacher - base

plus 15%).

A teacher will be given the opportunity to earn merit-based or performance-based pay increases. Both salary increases and performance pay considerations are contingent on the fiscal performance of NCCA. All faculty and administrative evaluations will be aligned to any required North Carolina teacher and administrative evaluation systems. The Governing Board is supportive of the state's efforts in examining teacher and administrator evaluations.

For non-teaching positions, a salary range will be determined based on research of market compensation and financial considerations. Initial employment offers will be based on specific criteria, including years of experience, education, and other relevant skills/qualification. After the initial hire, compensation increases and merit pay are based on performance. The budget provides estimated salaries by position. School administrative employees may be eligible for a bonus incentive. Bonuses are based on individual and school performance.

6. Provide the procedures for employee grievance and/or termination.

The Governing Board encourages open and direct lines of communication between employees at all levels of the organization. The resolution process includes concerns about the application of school policies and procedures within the school to school staff, parents, and students; concerns about personnel decisions directly involving an individual or decisions affecting other individuals at the school; work conditions; questions about the competence and overall fitness of a colleague or supervisor; and regulatory compliance.

1. If the issue does not involve a violation of school policy or an ethical or regulatory requirement, the employee should meet with at least two levels of administration. An employee must, in good faith, make every attempt to resolve the issue with his/her immediate supervisor and, if that is not successful, then with his/her next level supervisor, which will generally be the principal. Fear of retaliation, which is prohibited, is not a legitimate reason to skip this step. If the issue does involve a violation of school policy or an ethical or regulatory requirement, then the employee should proceed directly to step 2.

2. Put the Issue in Writing. If the immediate supervisor or the next level supervisor cannot resolve the issue, or if the issue involves a violation of school policy or an ethical or regulatory requirement, the employee should put the issue in writing. It is important to describe the issue, the desired result, and the proposed solution to the issue. This step should occur as soon as possible and in no event more than 20 business days after the occurrence of the problem.

3. If the issue relates to a personnel matter or work condition, contact the Governing Board. After an employee fully describes the issue in writing, the Governing Board will help the employee and supervisor consider how policies, procedures relate for the issue. Often, the policies in the handbook will dictate a resolution to the issue.

7. Identify any positions that will have dual responsibilities (within or without the organization) and the funding source for each position.

The Advisory Teacher/School Counselor will virtually assist students and Learning Coaches with course selection and scheduling, and will be the initial point of contact for student concerns that span multiple subjects areas as well as non-academic issues. The Advisory Teacher/School Counselor will become an expert on course and credit requirements and will work with the Manager of Counseling to establish counseling processes for middle and high school students.

8. *Describe the plans to have qualified staffing adequate for the anticipated special needs population, means for providing qualified staffing for ELL and gifted students.*

NCCA will employ a Manager of Special Education, two Special Education teachers, a Manager of Counseling, and four Advisory Teachers/School Counselors in Year 1. All staff will be qualified and certificated as required. A list of all projected staff positions is provided in Appendix M.

9. *Provide a narrative detailing the roles and responsibilities, qualifications and appropriate licenses that each position must have to be hired by the non-profit organization and effectively perform the job function(s).*

Principal

The principal will manage teachers as they use the phone and Internet to teach students and consult regularly with Learning Coaches and students, ensuring that each student successfully completes his/her instructional program. The principal is responsible for the overall school operation working with parents, students, support staff, and certified teachers who teach a virtual instructional program.

Critical Skills/Experience:

- * Administrative credential required
- * Minimum of five years of teaching experience and some administrative or management experience
- * Advanced degree is preferred
- * Excellent communication skills, both oral and written
- * Student-focused approach
- * Technologically proficient

Assistant Principal

The assistant principal will work collaboratively with the principal. He/she will manage all of the site-based, non-academic school operations. Additionally, he/she will work closely with the enrollment, technical support, materials management, fulfillment, finance, human resources, payroll, and facilities management functions. He/she will manage a range of special projects.

Critical Skills/Experience

- * Administrative certification
- * Minimum of five years of relevant work experience
- * Some operational/logistical experience and/or administrative/management experience
- * Relevant advanced degree is preferred
- * Education experience
- * Excellent communication skills, both oral and written
- * Technologically proficient

Administrative Assistant

The administrative assistant will be responsible for such daily

administrative tasks of the school as answering phones and email, receiving visitors, assign the principal and teachers with filing and other duties as assigned.

Critical Skills/Experience

- * Proficiency with Microsoft Office tools and web-based applications
- * Ability to multitask
- * Good interpersonal skills and attention to detail
- * Excellent communication skills, both oral and written
- * Student-focused approach

Teachers

Certified teachers will virtually teach students and support the instructional program. Through the use of the telephone, Internet, and various curriculum tools, teachers will teach students and consult regularly with Learning Coaches to ensure that each student successfully completes his/her instructional program.

Critical Skills/Experience

- * Highly qualified and certified to teach in North Carolina (appropriate to grade level responsibilities)
- * Strong technology skills (especially with Microsoft OS and Microsoft Office programs)
- * Excellent communication skills, both oral and written
- * Student-focused approach

Manager of Counseling

The manager of counseling will work in conjunction with the school's leadership team to help students, ensuring that each student successfully completes his/her instructional program. The manager will provide direction to staff and will assist students and parents in understanding and meeting graduation requirements, course selection and scheduling, post-secondary school planning, and crisis intervention. The manager will support the entire educational program of the school.

Critical Skills/Experience

- * Minimum of five years of teaching experience, some counseling/management experience
- * North Carolina Counseling Credential endorsement
- * Advanced degree
- * Technologically proficient
- * Excellent communication skills, both oral and written
- * Student-focused approach

Advisory Teacher/School Counselor

The advisory teacher will virtually assist students and Learning Coaches with course selection and scheduling and will be the initial point of contact for student concerns that span multiple subject areas as well as non-academic issues. The advisory teacher will become an expert on course and credit requirements and will work with the manager of counseling to establish counseling processes for middle and high school students.

Critical Skills/Experience

- * North Carolina teacher certification in a secondary content area or grade level

- * Strong technology skills
- * Excellent communication skills, both oral and written
- * Student-focused approach
- * Excellent attention to detail and organizational skills
- * High degree of flexibility

Manager of Special Education

The manager of special education, who reports to the principal, will oversee all aspects of educational service delivery for students with special education needs. The manager will ensure that the school operates in compliance with all state and federal regulations, and that data is being collected, stored, and updated in a manner that meets all compliance expectations.

The manager will ensure that the school is providing appropriate programs in the least restrictive environment for all students with special needs. This will include managing the pre-referral and IEP processes, maintaining student data, communicating with parents, locating and contracting with service providers throughout the state, and ensuring that the school operates in compliance with special education law and procedures at all times. The manager may also have a reduced teaching load.

Critical Skills/Experience

- * Master's degree in special education or related education field
- * Valid special education credential in North Carolina
- * Teaching experience in special education
- * Expertise in special education law and compliance
- * Excellent communication skills, both oral and written
- * Student-focused approach
- * Technologically proficient
- * Experienced in IDEA policy and/or administration with special education

Special Education Teachers

The special education teacher will virtually teach students with special needs and manage instructional programs for students with special needs. Through the use of the telephone, Internet, and various curriculum tools, he/she will teach students and consult regularly with Learning Coaches and students to ensure that each student successfully completes his/her instructional program. The special education teacher will participate in all steps of the IEP process. He/she will work closely with other teachers and district/state professionals to ensure that the school's special education program is successful and operating in compliance with federal and state regulations. The special education teacher will utilize technology to deliver virtual instruction and teach students.

Critical Skills/Experience

- * Degree in special education or related education field
- * Valid special education credential in North Carolina
- * Experience in IDEA policy and/or administration with special education
- * Strong technology skills
- * Excellent communication skills, both oral and written
- * Student-focused approach

Contracted Financial Services

NCCA will contract with a third party for financial services. NCCA intends to contract with the North Carolina Public Charter School Association (NCPSCA) for business, financial, and accounting services. NCPSCA will directly report to the Governing Board and will be independent of Connections. NCPSCA will follow a financial and accounting plan compliant with generally accepted accounting principals (GAAP) and will provide an accurate accounting of all of its finances, ensure sufficient information for audit purposes, and provide data in the format needed for accurate and timely annual financial reports. NCPSCA will ensure that NCCA will comply with federal monitoring requirements for any federal funds it receives. Each month, NCPSCA will prepare for the Governing Board a set of detailed financial statements that will include a revenue and expense statement, a balance sheet, invoice detail (vendor, amount, date, purpose), and grant fund expenditures, cash receipts from all sources, and a transaction listing of all activity in the school's bank account.

Staff Evaluation and Professional Development

1. *Identify the positions responsible for maintaining teacher licensure requirements and professional development.*

All certificated employees will be responsible for maintaining licensure and will be required to fulfill any professional development mandated by North Carolina to maintain a valid license. Certification and renewal will be monitored.

2. *Provide a detailed plan noting how the school will mentor, retain, and evaluate staff in a format that matches the school's mission, educational program, and meet the teacher certification and licensure requirements for teachers as prescribed by state law and No Child Left Behind. Be sure this overview matches with the projected staff and funding of the proposed budget section.*

Teachers will participate in a performance evaluation system aligned to teaching standards, school goals, and student performance. Through ongoing teacher training and professional development, participation in professional learning communities, peer review, and varied career ladder opportunities, teachers will be effective and consistently focused on student learning and continuous improvement. Instructional leaders will utilize data provided through Connexus and the state accountability system to drive professional development both for individual teachers and the school as whole.

Teachers (and other staff) will be evaluated by the principal and/or other managers along with feedback solicited from families. Instructional staff will be observed on a regular basis and evaluated using a comprehensive, multi-layered system. The teacher evaluation system may include the following and will be aligned to North Carolina teacher evaluation systems.

- * Parent surveys which may rate overall responsiveness, effectiveness, knowledge, and skills
- * Principal evaluations of performance on the Core Standards for Facilitating Student Learning from observations of Learning Coach/student interaction, including LiveLesson sessions, review of correspondence, and aggregate performance of enrolled students based on a value-added improvement model and documents by data from Connexus
- * Peer reviews evaluating the degree of cooperation, support, and sharing of knowledge
- * An annual performance plan created by each teacher incorporating strategies to achieve measurable school goals
- * Achievement of overall school goals

Supporting the principal in making the transition to a virtual setting will be critical to the success of the school. It involves the support of a number of individuals and resources. With Governing Board approval through the agreement with Connections, the principal will be supported by providing a mentor (an experienced virtual school leader who will work with the principal one-on-one) for the first year. In addition, the principal will participate in a two-year onboarding program in the form of Boot Camp 101 and Boot Camp 201. Both of these programs are directed by one or more of Connections' Directors of Schools who conducts monthly training sessions focused on many critical topics centered on tasks the new leader needs to know how to perform, resources to help them in their daily work, and best practices to help them be the instructional leader of the school.

The Principal Orientation Course and Program Handbook was created so that principals will learn the same content that teachers learn in the Teacher Orientation Course while also learning how to be a successful school leader. Additional training will also be provided in the form of manager training (e.g., students in distress) on an ongoing as needed basis.

The school principal evaluation system may include the following and will be aligned to North Carolina administrator evaluation systems:

- * Parent surveys rating the responsiveness, effectiveness, and instructional expertise
 - * Aggregate performance of enrolled students based on a value-added improvement model as documented through data captured by Connexus
- An annual performance plan create by the principal detailing his/her strategies to achieve measureable school goals
- * Review of the basic competencies of a school leader including school culture, leadership, communications, data management, time management, personnel management, and instructional leadership

The principal will be evaluated by the Governing Board with data and may be assisted by consultative functions provided by Connections. The effectiveness of the principal in all areas related to the day-to-day operations of the school, as well as areas related to overall school performance will be evaluated.

3. *Describe the core components of professional development plan and how these components will support effective implementation of the educational program. Describe the extent to which professional development will be conducted internally or externally and will be individualized or uniform.*

The principal, or designated member of the school leadership team, will be responsible for ensuring all staff attend professional development sessions. The principal, supported by Connections, will establish the school's year-long professional development calendar, send session reminders along with any required pre-work, and track staff attendance. The principal can pull real-time reports in Connexus that identify which teachers attended a session, whether they attended live (online) or watched the session recording, and review the artifact that each teacher uploaded as part of the post-assignment.

Teachers professional development will be critically important in ensuring that the staff is optimally effective in teaching in a virtual environment and addressing the North Carolina Essential State Standards and the Common

Core State Standards. in their daily instructional practice. The school will use the National Standards for Quality Online Teaching published by the International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL) (<http://www.inacol.org/resources/nationalstandards/NACOL%20Standards%20Quality%20Online%20Teaching.pdf>) and the Connections Core Standards for Facilitating Student Learning, as guides for pinpointing necessary teachers skills and professional development requirements.

Connections will support NCCA by providing teacher training both online and face-to-face, and professional development software including software tutorials, Internet training materials, and software training materials. Training will begin prior to the first day of school.

At the direction of the Governing Board, Connections will provide NCCA with teacher orientation courses and at least 12 additional professional development sessions throughout the year. In addition, Connections will support specific professional development needs as determined by the principal.

- 4. Provide a schedule and explanation of professional development that will take place prior to school opening. Explain what will be covered during this induction period and how teachers will be prepared to deliver any unique or particularly challenging aspects of the curriculum and instructional methods.*

Initial and Returning Teacher Orientation Course

Within the first 30 days of being hired or starting a new school year, all teachers and the principal will complete either the Teacher Orientation Course (for new teachers) or the Returning Teacher Orientation Course (for returning teachers) and Exploring Your Courses. The courses are delivered through Connexus and contain lessons, assessments, and links to online tutorials. The focus of these courses is to prepare teachers for teaching through the Connexus platform. They cover curriculum, assessment, personalizing instruction, school year events, grading, the grade book, communication, and essential Connexus tools. Upon successful completion of this course and assessments, teachers will be ready to begin instruction. Teachers will be expected to earn a grade of 80% or higher in the courses.

In Exploring Your Courses, teachers explore the curriculum and instructional resources they and their students will use during the school year. Lessons focus on instructional resources used to differentiate curriculum, using data to make instructional decisions, engaging students in the learning process, and available supports for teachers as they work to enhance their teaching practices. This course contains multiple assessments through which teachers and the professional development staff evaluate teacher understanding, preparedness, and effective tools to communicate and collaborate with colleagues.

Pre-Service Face-to-Face Training

In addition to the self-guided course, staff will engage in several days of face-to-face training and orientation on site with materials, guidance, and topics. The focus of this training will be best practices in an online environment, advanced orientation to the curriculum, and Connexus beyond what is included in the self-guided course, and substantial training on working effectively with students, Learning Coaches, and parents. New updates to Connexus, interventions, and data dashboards for the school year

will also be included.

The pre-service, face-to-face professional development occurs before the start of school and includes reviewing, discussing, and activities on:

- * The Core Standards for Facilitating Student Learning, which are the essential values, vision, and protocols through which teachers and school leaders work together
- * School year cycle, the flow of the online school year, including the key milestones used to guide, monitor, and assess student learning (e.g., Welcome Call, PLP discussions, curriculum-based assessments)
- * Navigating Connexus, including practice with lessons, assessments, grading, evaluating student learning, providing feedback, customizing students' programs, and recording (logging) contacts, conversations, and instructional interventions via demonstration of student, teacher, and Learning Coach accounts
- * School-based PLC work including building collaboration within and across grade levels
- * Ensuring teachers are prepared to have student-centered, successful first day, first week, and first month of school

Education Resource Center

To support NCCA staff, Connections will provide an educational resources center during the hours of 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM Eastern Time during the academic year with education professionals trained in the delivery of online curriculum to provide the principal and the teaching staff with additional education support services and professional development in the areas of special education, gifted education, instructional delivery, and curriculum services.

In addition to a more national PLC process, the school staff will also be included in a PLC that will focus daily on student success. This process will promote a collaborative approach in helping students be successful, believing that all students can succeed at a high level. Support and instructional efforts are based on student outcomes.

5. Describe the expected number of days/hours for professional development throughout the school year, and explain how the school's calendar, daily schedule, and staffing structure accommodate this plan.

The principal, supported by the expertise of Connections, will develop a systematic approach to professional development for all staff. Topics for trainings will be selected based on school goals, student performance data, national initiatives in education, and research-based best practices. Regular days in the school calendar will be set aside as professional development days for teachers to devote to professional learning opportunities. The annual professional development series focuses on:

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

This is a sample calendar of events currently being implemented for the 2013-2014 school year in schools supported by Connections nationwide. Upon approval of the charter, NCCA will develop a similar schedule of events.

- * Aug. 26-30, 2013 Face-to-Face Pre-service Training
- * Before Sept. 1, 2013 Exploring Your Courses
- * Before Sept. 1, 2013 Session 1: Orientation
- * Before Sept. 1, 2013 Session 2: Preparing for Next Generation Assessments
- * Sept. 16 - Oct. 11, 2013 Session 3: What Makes a Difference? Identifying and Working with At-Risk Students
- * Oct. 14 - Nov. 8, 2013 Session #4: Who are My Students? The Importance of Knowing Your Students' Academic History and Identifying their Indicators for Success
- * Nov. 11 - Dec. 6, 2013 Session #5: What is Academic Language? Common Core Shift for English Language Arts/Literacy
- * Dec. 9, 2013 - Jan. 17, 2014 Session #6: Are My Students Learning? The Importance of Monitoring Student Performance, Engaging Students in Learning, Providing Valuable Feedback, and Knowing How and When to Intervene
- * Jan. 20 - Feb. 14, 2014 Session 7: What is Conceptual Understanding? Common Core Shift for Mathematics
- * Feb. 17 - Mar. 21, 2014 Session 8: Are My Students Progressing? The Importance of Using Fresh Data to Inform Instructional Decisions
- * Mar. 24 - Apr. 25, 2014 Session #9: What is Text-Based Evidence? The Common Core Shift for English Language Arts/Literacy
- * April 28 - May 23, 2014 Session #10: What is Writing from Sources? The Common Core Shift for English Language Arts/Literacy
- * May 26 - June 20, 2014 Session #11: Why Should I Make Real World Connections? The Common Core Shift for Mathematics

Following each session, teachers will be required to upload an artifact to their professional development e-portfolio. The artifact is intended to give teachers the opportunity to put what they learned during the session into practice. For example, after a session focusing on instructional strategies for at-risk students, teachers will be required to identify the data within Connexus that they will use to identify students who may be at risk and how this data will change their instructional planning and practices. Along with the artifact, the teacher will also submit a reflection of what they have learned from the session. Completion of the artifact and reflection will take approximately 30 minutes.

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

Professional development session will use evaluation surveys and collaborative tools to elicit teacher and administrator feedback. Audits, evaluations, and site visits will be used to gauge the effectiveness of the training and to ensure initiatives are implemented with high fidelity.

Enrollment and Marketing:

Reaching the full capacity for enrollment will be critical to obtain the necessary financial resources to keep your school viable and operating efficiently. In addition, it is required by law that charter schools provide equal access to all students. Read the charter school state statute regarding admissions GS 115C.238.29F(g) (1-7) carefully.

Marketing Plan

Marketing to potential students and parents is vital to the survival of a charter school. Provide a plan indicating how the school will market to potential students and parents in order to reasonably reflect the racial/ethnic and demographic composition of the district in which the charter school will be located or of the special population the school seeks to serve: (G.S.115C-238.29F(g)(5)).

Student recruitment and enrollment policies need to be balanced with the mutual goals of ensuring that families are aware of the choice opportunity and the competing demand of being fiscally conservative. NCCA has an active base of interested families that have already reached out, without any direct contact, to the Connections website seeking additional information about the school. Upon approval of the charter, NCCA will actively recruit families that represent the full cultural, demographic, and socioeconomic range of North Carolina.

* Direct Mail: NCCA will conduct direct mail campaigns announcing the school to families with children throughout North Carolina. In a typical mailing, a postcard will be sent out inviting parents to attend an Information Session, visit the website, and/or contact by phone. NCCA may also use email to supplement or replace this physical mail campaign.

* Information Sessions: NCCA will conduct multiple Information Sessions across the state to assure that families from a variety of communities are able to attend. Information sessions may also be virtual and families may attend from home via their computers. NCCA will educate families about the school and provide a complete array of information, including its curriculum, teaching methods, technology resources, and testing requirements.

* Website: Connections will create and maintain a website with a special link to NCCA. The website will contain information about NCCA, its approach, its curriculum, and FAQs and their answers. The site will also include enrollment information and procedures, information sessions schedules, and other useful tools for prospective students and their families.

* Telephone/email information service: NCCA will launch and maintain a toll-free information line and an email information service to answer parents' questions.

* Community and youth services partnerships: As part of its outreach process, NCCA will provide information about the charter school to the community that may include youth-serving organizations such as Boys and Girls clubs, parent groups, health-related organizations, and organizations for young actors, dancers, and athletes.

* Media Outreach: NCCA will make use of paid media, primarily advertisements in local newspapers and radio service announcements.

* Referrals/word of mouth: As NCCA grows, it anticipates that an increasing number of families who come to the school will enroll due to positive feedback received from their friends, community members, traditional school leaders, and family. In similar schools nationally, 95% of parents say they

would recommend their school to friends, neighbors, and relatives.

* Search Engines and Social Media: NCCA will be linked to leading Internet search engines with local reference capability to help North Carolina families looking for a virtual school option find this high-quality charter school. In addition, NCCA will benefit from Facebook, Twitter, and other social media outreach conducted by parent advocates.

Parent and Community Involvement

1. *Describe how you will communicate with and engage parents and community members from the time that the school is approved through opening.*
2. *Describe how you will engage parents in the life of the public charter school. Explain the plan for building engaging partnerships between the family and school that strengthen support for student learning.*

NCCA values parental engagement. The Governing Board intends to maintain at least one parent representative among its members in the future. After the school is approved, the Governing Board will open consideration for interested parents who would like to serve on the Governing Board. Parents will serve as Learning Coaches and play an active role in the learning process, providing input, and communicating regularly with teachers. NCCA will promote the significant role of parents by providing training for parents and multiple avenues for communication. Regular feedback through surveys and the StarTrack system encourages summative and formative feedback for the learning process and program.

Parents will have multiple opportunities to shape the overall school experience. During the life of the school, they can volunteer to serve as Community Coordinators, arranging field trips and other face-to-face activities among families who live nearby. In addition to facilitating field trips and outings, Community Coordinators will often develop group projects, typically with a charitable or community service goal for students to participate in face-to-face as well as virtually. Community Coordinators will have the support and encouragement from staff to coordinate local projects for their students. Park cleanups, walkathons, and community celebrations are examples of the many opportunities students have to learn skills while serving the greater good.

Before the school opens, parents can also join Club Orange. This exciting club brings together parents of prospective students who reach out to their local communities to spread the word about NCCA.

We will survey parents annually to evaluate the school on a number of criteria including student progress, teacher support, and quality of the curriculum. Parents will be surveyed to get their feedback on the program to help identify what the school is doing well and how it can improve.

Frequent and purposeful communication with parents and Learning Coaches help the teacher monitor the student's progress, keep parent informed of current school happenings, and help the school grow and improve from parent feedback. Scheduled phone calls, LiveLesson sessions, WebMail messages, and face-to-face meetings will all be used to help conduct parent-teacher conferences. NCCA will regularly provide templates for communication and distribute important information in collaboration with the principal through

school newsletters, the home page, must read WebMail messages to ensure parents will be informed. Teachers will document all communication with parents and/or students in the log section of Connexus, which allows for detailed tracking of interactions as well as seamless support for students and their families from multiple individuals.

Communication will also be important outside of Connexus for existing and prospective families and community members. Drawing on the combined experience of Connections' outreach and technology groups, NCCA will maintain a public website that contains all relevant and required information to ensure all stakeholders are informed about NCCA. The website will include enrollment and school information and also create opportunities for parent-to-parent communication through Ask-A-Parent. NCCA will develop a student information and community education plan to inform potential students, their parents/guardians, and other interested parties about the education program.

- 3. List the strategies the virtual charter school will implement to involve parents and the community regularly in their child's education. Detail any required or optional meetings that are scheduled to occur throughout the academic year (i.e. open houses or school community meetings).*

At least one parent will have a seat on the Governing Board. Parent members benefit from intensive training geared toward making them effective representatives of parent interests. Parent Governing Board members will be encouraged to seek officer positions. Parents may serve on ad hoc groups convened by the Governing Board to focus on such particular issues as community partnerships and neighborhood outreach. The volunteer-parent Community Coordinators will develop a vibrant and active school community. In addition to facilitating family get-togethers and formal field trips, the Community Coordinators provide an important communication link between families and the school ensuring through phone conferences and news updates that school staff will be attuned to parent and community needs and vice versa.

On a daily basis, NCCA parents will express their opinion about school matters large and small. Through the five-star StarTrack lesson rating system, they can rate and comment upon every lesson in the curriculum and their entire school experience. The principal will often conduct informal surveys and call for feedback via WebMail. Parents will participate in a formal annual satisfaction survey to evaluate the school on a number of criteria including student progress, teacher support, and quality of the curriculum. Parents will be surveyed to get their feedback on the program to help identify what the school is doing well and how it can improve. Community Coordinators and staff will reach out to community-based organizations and businesses to coordinate face-to-face community service and field trip opportunities for students. NCCA will draw upon the deep and diverse community connections represented on the Governing Board whose members represent business and education entities across the state and beyond to ensure that students have multiple opportunities to benefit.

- 4. Define how the virtual charter school will facilitate student attendance at any in-person school activities. If parents indicate that transportation is an issue, describe how the school will ensure that students are able to attend.*

As NCCA will be a virtual school, students will not require transportation services for regular school activities which will occur primarily in their homes and immediate vicinities. The only mandatory school events that may require schools to report somewhere other than their home or immediate neighborhood will be: a) special orientation sessions, and b) state standardized testing. For other optional in-person activities such as field trips, teachers will coordinate with parents to facilitate transportation through carpooling as much as possible.

5. *Expound upon procedures for parents to contact the virtual school faculty, administration, or governing board with concerns of any nature. Further, depict the school's process for promptly addressing the identified issues.*

Parent Grievance Resolution Process - These responsibilities will be set out in the Parent/Legal Caretaker Agreement (PLCA) and the school handbook and include: contacting families regularly, delivering educational materials and equipment, and providing accessible support. NCCA will also ensure the family and student adhere to their responsibilities as stated in the PLCA and the school handbook and if necessary will discipline for violation of policy. If a parent has concerns, he/she may institute the grievance process outlined in the handbook.

1. A parent with a grievance must, in writing, report the dissatisfaction, and submit it to the student's teacher (or other appropriate NCCA staff member as necessary). All parties involved must be appropriately defined and the problem must be clearly outlined.

2. The recipient of the grievance (generally the teacher) must review the issue with his/her supervisor (generally the principal) and respond to the parent within three school days.

3. If the original recipient did not resolve the grievance, the parent should request a meeting with the recipient's supervisor. The supervisor should investigate the matter, and schedule a meeting with the parent, the student, if necessary, and any other staff members (if necessary), within five school days.

4. If either party does not resolve this grievance, the parent should then request a meeting with the school administration. School administration will investigate the matter and schedule a meeting within five school days.

5. If a resolution was not reached at the three meetings, the parent may request a meeting with the parent member of the Governing Board, who will investigate the matter, and arrange a meeting within five school days.

6. *Describe how the virtual charter school instructional and administrative staff will communicate with non-English speaking students, parents, and guardians.*

Under State Board of Education policy, a home language survey will be administered for every student at the time of enrollment. NCCA will evaluate the results of each survey and determine what assistance is needed in order to ensure that the student will have access to the educational program. NCCA will provide school communications in native languages to the extent possible for parents who speak a language other than English.

Admissions Policy

Provide the school's proposed policies and the procedures for admitting students to the proposed charter school, including:

1. *Tentative dates for the open enrollment application period; enrollment deadlines and procedures. *Please be advised schools cannot accept applications until after final approval from the SBE.*
2. *Clear policies and procedures detailing the open enrollment lottery plan including policies regarding statutory permitted student enrollment preferences.*
3. *Clear policies and procedures for student waiting lists, withdrawals, re-enrollment, and transfers.*
4. *Explanation of the purpose of any pre-admission activities (if any) for students or parents.*
5. *Clear policies and procedures for student withdraws and transfers.*

NCCA will be open to all students statewide on a space-available basis and will not discriminate in its admissions policies or practices on the basis of intellectual or athletic ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, status as a handicapped person, proficiency in the English language, or any other basis that would be illegal if used by a school district as stated in GS 115C-238.29F(g)(5). Enrollment will open on March 1 of the preceding school year and will remain open for 30 days.

NCCA will actively recruit students to reflect the statewide racial and ethnic balance. Through extensive community outreach and full disclosure about the school's program, NCCA will attract those students and families who are most committed to student success in a virtual school setting. NCCA will utilize a broad-reaching student recruitment effort, thereby ensuring outreach to families with a wide variety of racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. In addition, NCCA may focus on certain subgroups for extra recruitment efforts in order to achieve a pool of potential students that reflects a balanced student population. Partnerships and outreach efforts using a variety of community and youth organizations may aid in this process.

As a public school, NCCA will not charge tuition. Outreach communications will inform families that the school is tuition-free. As a public school, NCCA will be non-sectarian in its programs, admission policies, employment practices, and all other operations. Admission to the school will not be determined according to the place of residence of any pupil, or his/her parent or guardian within North Carolina.

Should the number of applicants exceed the enrollment levels during the initial enrollment period, NCCA will conduct a lottery that is in keeping with state and federal guidelines. If the school is oversubscribed at the end of 30 days, a computer generated random number lottery would be conducted in public and all parents would be notified in advance.

The lottery will provide for a random selection process by which all applicants who have completed all enrollment tasks by a specified, publicly announced deadline will be given an equal chance of being admitted. NCCA will give preference to students who were enrolled in the school in the prior year (once enrolled, students will not be required to reapply); and siblings of students presently enrolled. Parents of students selected in the lottery will have 10 days to accept an offer of enrollment or forfeit the

student's space to the next student on the list. If the school is not oversubscribed at the end of the open enrollment period, students will be enrolled on a first-come/first-served basis. After all space is full, students will be waitlisted and released to enroll based on availability in their grade and the date all enrollment tasks were completed. Connexus automatically assigns a waitlist time/date stamp to all students.

Students may withdraw from NCCA at any time in accordance with state statute, provided the Learning Coach provides either evidence of homeschool registration consistent with state requirements or the name and location of another public or private school that the student will attend. Prior to withdrawing, the school will encourage the Learning Coach and/or student to discuss with school staff the reason(s) for withdrawing as it may be possible to address issues so the student does not need to withdraw. This data will be recorded and reviewed by the principal so school leadership can continually reflect on the school's ability to serve its families and students. If a student becomes ineligible or leaves the charter school, NCCCA will ensure that all appropriate paperwork is submitted and/or forwarded to the new school.

PROJECTED ENROLLMENT 2015-16 through 2019-2020

IDENTIFY LEA FROM WHICH STUDENTS WILL PROBABLY COME

- LEA #1 Guilford County Schools
- LEA #2 Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools
- LEA #3 Wake County Schools

In the following tables, please list for each year and grade level, the numbers of students that the school reasonably expects to enroll. In addition, please indicate any plans to increase the grade levels offered by the school over time and be sure these figures match those on the initial cover page.

	2015-2016			2016-2017			2017-2018			2018-2019			2019-2020		
	LEA 410	LEA 600	LEA 920	LEA 410	LEA 600	LEA 920	LEA 410	LEA 600	LEA 920	LEA 410	LEA 600	LEA 920	LEA 410	LEA 600	LEA 920
Grade 06	28	57	57	42	85	85	57	114	114	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grade 07	29	57	57	43	86	86	57	114	114	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grade 08	29	57	57	43	86	86	57	114	114	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grade 09	28	58	58	43	86	86	58	115	115	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grade 10	29	57	57	43	86	86	57	115	115	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grade 11	29	57	57	43	86	86	57	114	114	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grade 12	28	57	57	43	85	85	57	114	114	0	0	0	0	0	0
	200	400	400	300	600	600	400	800	800	0	0	0	0	0	0
	1000			1500			2000			0			0		

Transportation Plan:

Describe in detail the transportation plan that will ensure that no child is denied access to the school due to lack of transportation. The details of this plan should align with the Mission, identified need for the charter school, targeted student population, and the budget proposal.

As NCCA will be an online, virtual school serving students throughout the state, it will not provide routine transportation. Students will not require transportation services for regular school activities which will occur primarily in their homes and immediate vicinities. The only mandatory school events that may require students to report somewhere other than their home or immediate neighborhood will be: a) special orientation sessions, and b) state standardized testing which students will take at proctored locations. NCCA will provide transportation for required activities and state testing and when a student does not have transportation necessary to go to the proctored location.

As a statewide virtual school, NCCA's obligation to provide transportation services will be limited to those students whose IEP and/or Section 504 plan requires services to be provided that are typically provided outside the home. NCCA will utilize three options for providing students with access to these services.

1. NCCA will compensate a service provider to provide services in the student's home whenever possible.
2. For parents who prefer students to receive services outside the home, or when a service provider is not available to provide services inside the home, NCCA will provide mileage reimbursement to parents who are available to transport the student.
3. In all other circumstances, NCCA will contract with one or more third party transportation providers at no cost to the student or parent to transport the student to the service provider location.

If field trips or regional centers are utilized for synchronous education, how will the virtual charter assist students that do not have transportation?

Through the use of Connexus and message boards, school leadership will coordinate carpooling and ride sharing opportunities.

School Lunch Plan:

Describe in detail the school lunch plan that will ensure that no child is lacking a daily meal. The details of this plan should align with the targeted student population and school budget proposal.

Since NCCA will serve students statewide primarily out of their homes, the school will not be offering a food service program. Parents will be fully informed of this fact prior to their student's enrollment in the school so that they can make the best school choice for their family.

For purposes of demographic documentation however, NCCA will request during the enrollment process that families who qualify for Free or Reduced Price

Meals, based on past eligibility for these services or current family income - so identify themselves. The purpose of collecting this information is to ensure that the school will be prepared to arrange supplemental educational resources available to students and the school based on incidence of poverty. Parents will be fully informed that volunteering this information will not entitle their family to meal service. NCCA staff will refer families who qualify for Free or Reduced Price meals to local social service agencies for food assistance upon request. In the event that the federally funded lunch program is changed to permit the distribution of direct assistance to families, NCCA will be prepared to seek funds to provide this service.

Civil Liability and Insurance (GS 115C-238.29F(c)):

The Charter School shall obtain and maintain insurance at a minimum in the following amounts:

1. Errors and omissions: one million dollars (\$1,000,000) per claim;
2. General liability: one million dollars (\$1,000,000) per occurrence;
3. Boiler and machinery: the replacement cost of the building;
4. Real and personal property: the appraised value of the building and contents;
5. Fidelity bonds: no less than two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000) to cover employee dishonesty;
6. Automobile liability: one million dollars (\$1,000,000) per occurrence; and
7. Workers' compensation: as specified by Chapter 97 of the General Statutes.

Area of proposed coverage	Proposed amount of coverage		Cost (Quote)
Comprehensive General Liability	\$2,000,000		\$1,250.00
Officers and Directors/Errors and Omissions	\$1,000,000		\$1,750.00
Property Insurance	\$100,000		\$331.00
Motor Vehicle Liability	\$1,000,000		\$28.00
Bonding Minimum/Maximum Amount	\$250,000	\$500,000	\$148.00
Other	\$1,000,000		\$784.00
Total Cost			\$4,291.00

*The applicant must provide a quote from an insurance provider as part of this application (as Appendix O) to demonstrate the levels of insurance coverage and projected cost.

Health and Safety Requirements:

All public charter schools are required to follow the regulations regarding health and safety as stated in § 115C238.29F (a).

1. *Discuss the data retention and confidentiality procedures for the virtual school. In the event of a catastrophe, explain the data protection and data recovery systems.*

Access to student information and data at NCCA will be controlled by a central team of administrators, trained in FERPA, using a complex system of roles, permissions, and locations. Only users in a particular location who have the permissions at that location are permitted to access student data that is permissioned using roles and locations. Data points and reports will be assigned to roles. Access to the reports and all student data will be controlled by these roles. Only users in a location with the

correct roles can meet the requirements to access the data.

All data that will be accessed via Connexus will be managed through a forced SSL for privacy and security purposes. Private data transmitted between systems for data reporting purposes will always be done with secure FTP or over a private VPN that provides encryption. To ensure that valuable data will be available when needed but protected from misuse, Connections utilizes disk-to-disk backups for fast restore. The disk backup is then saved to the DLT multi-drive tape backup libraries for off-site storage. On a bi-weekly basis, the backup tapes are removed for secure off-site storage.

Connexus is available 24/7/365 except for regularly scheduled weekly maintenance. The network employs a modular, scalable design that provides multiple levels of security, redundancy, and failover. Backup Exec is provided from Symantec Corp. Multiple infrastructure security components ensure protection from viruses and hackers.

2. Provide the virtual charter school's Acceptable Use Policy.

Connections has an extensive Terms of Use document that governs Connexus and its users for terms, conditions, and notices. The agreement applies to users of Connexus and all materials, information, software, content, products, and services that are owned or licensed by Connections Education LLC and included in, or available through, Connexus as well as any content owned or licensed by a third-party content provider that is included in, or available through connexus with that third party's permission. These Terms of Use will be updated periodically. The most current version will always be available from the login page of Connexus. Any changes will be effective as soon as they are posted in Connexus.

The Terms of Use document is applicable to all users and covers acceptance of terms, permitted use, proprietary rights, copyright infringement, trademarks, links, privacy, export control, warranty, and other disclaimers, a disclaimer of warranty, limitations of liability, release, indemnification, governing law, severability, and integration, and termination of use. The full policy can be viewed at the following URL:

<https://www.connexus.com/public/termsOfUse.html>

3. Describe the health and safety standards adopted by the school for both online and offline student activities.

NCCA takes student safety and well-being seriously. Students should be able to learn in a safe and comfortable environment. NCCA requires two courses focused on safety.

Internet Safety - This course provides information about practicing safe behaviors online.

Students in Distress: Recognizing and Responding - This course is designed to ensure teachers and other school staff are familiar with the signs of student distress and to know how to respond promptly and professionally when they observe such signs or behaviors.

All members of school staff must complete the trainings at the beginning of the school year, and then refer to the trainings throughout the year as needed. School leadership will track staff completion of trainings to ensure all staff members have completed them in a timely manner.

Learning Coaches will be asked to communicate and collaborate with teachers and other school staff

as the staff members work to fulfill their professional roles in supporting student safety and well-being. They will be asked to involve additional parties as appropriate to address concerns and to always keep student safety and well-being at the center of the conversation.

Additionally, computers provided by Connections will have an application installed that enables automatic blocking of adult, phishing, and identity theft sites via DNS filtering. Modified browser security settings will limit potential malicious activity; CyberSitter can be installed upon request, and computers will have an anti-virus/malware tool installed. Technical Support will assist families with installing similar programs.

We, the Board members at (Charter School Name) will develop a written safety plan and policies to be shared with staff, parents and students and be available upon inspection from the Department of Public Instruction and local Health Departments.

bsetser 12/04/2013

(Board Chair Signature)

(Date)

Facility:

Note that the SBE may approve a charter school prior to the school's obtaining a facility; however, students may not attend school and no funds will be allocated until the school has obtained a valid Certificate of Occupancy for Educational use to the Office of Charter Schools.

What is your plan to obtain a building? Identify the steps that the board will take to acquire a facility and obtain the Educational Certificate of Occupancy. If a facility has been identified please fill out the Facility Form (Appendix N).

NCCA has not secured a location for the teaching/learning center (administrative office). However, information regarding 23 potential properties located in Raleigh/Cary and Durham that could potentially serve as the center has been provided in Appendix Q. Upon award of the charter, NCCA will secure a facility within the requirements of the charter.

NCCA has analyzed several locations, including potential shared/joint use facilities based upon criteria needed to run an effective virtual school. Since facilities will not be needed until the fall of 2015, it is premature to perform a detailed analysis of facilities, as available rental properties will be significantly different in several months. Virtual schools require minimal build out which can be accomplished in the time frame needed.

The leased permanent office space will serve as a teaching/learning center where administrative and teaching staff will work. It may also serve as a resource center for students. The initial physical facility for the teaching/learning center will need to be flexible for growth and future needs. The teaching/learning center will include at least one conference room with doors for use in IEP conferences and other special education-related activities.

Criteria that will be used to analyze facilities will include the following:

* The teaching/learning center will have a central location with easy access from major roadways to allow students and staff from various areas to reach it easily. The facility will have adequate space for teacher cubicles, a principal's office, a conference room, and a break room/kitchenette.

* The teaching/learning center will have a Certificate of Occupancy, air-conditioning, heat, fluorescent lights, male and female bathrooms and handicap accessibility, and full sprinkler system and other fire safety equipment.

* The teaching/learning center will provide the necessary infrastructure to support the computer network.

* The school estimates approximately 125 square feet per staff person (estimated space of 6,000 square feet total) to meet its minimum requirements, allowing for necessary common space, egress, typical build out for conference room and kitchenette.

* The teaching/learning center space is in compliance with or capable of modification to bring into compliance with all local building, zoning, and health and safety requirements.

* The teaching/learning center meets all local minimum Americans with Disabilities (ADA) standards.

* The teaching/learning center has ample parking accommodations.

* The teaching/learning center is available to move-in within three to six months from the date of search.

* The teaching/learning center is comprised of approximately 20% office space and 80% open area for cubicles.

NCCA will take the necessary steps to ensure the Certificate of Occupancy. Student will be present in the teaching/learning center only on the rare drop-in basis, and will not gather there for instructional activities.

Facility Contingency Plan: *Describe the method of finding a facility if the one the board has identified will not be ready by the time the public charter school will be opening. Include information regarding the immediate spatial needs of the school and identify any programs that will not be immediately offered because a permanent facility has yet to open.*

The flexible teaching model allows teachers to educate students remotely, from the teaching/learning center, from multiple teaching/learning centers, or from a temporary location. This maximizes expansion and contraction potential and eliminates the need for excessive, under-utilized space. Teachers may earn the right to occasionally work remotely which provides an opportunity for more local services and the ability to conduct field trips and information sessions. It also allows for more personalized support and assistance for local state testing efforts.

V. FINANCIAL PLAN

In the following sections present a detailed description of assumptions and revenue estimates, including but not limited to the basis for revenue projections, staffing levels, and costs. The narrative should specifically address the degree to which the school budget will rely on variable income.

Budget: Revenue Projections from each LEA 2015-16

<p>SHOW CALCULATIONS FOR FIGURING STATE AND LOCAL DOLLARS FOR THE PROPOSED CHARTER SCHOOL</p> <p><i>Refer to the Resource Manual Finance Section for guidance on estimated funding amounts</i></p>	<p>State Funds: Charter schools receive an equivalent amount per student as the local education agency (LEA) receives per student receives from the State. Funding is based on the 1st month average daily membership.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In year 1 – Base state allotments are determined by the LEA in which <u>the student</u> resides In year 2 and beyond- Base State allotments are determined by the LEA in which <u>the school</u> is located. <p>Local Funds: Charter schools receive a per pupil share of the local current expense of the LEA in which the student resides.</p> <p>Federal Funds: Charter schools must qualify and apply for the individual federal grants based on their population of students.</p> <p>REFER TO RESOURCE GUIDE FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND SOURCE DOCUMENTS</p>			
	<p>LEA #1 410 - Guilford County Schools</p>			
	Revenue	2013-2014 Per Pupil Funding	Projected LEA ADM	Approximate funding for 2015-2016
	State Funds	\$4,656.79	200	\$931,358.00
	Local Funds	\$2,614.00	200	\$522,800.00
	Federal EC Funds	\$3,578.93	24	\$85,894.32
	Totals			\$1,540,052.32
	<p>LEA #2 600 - Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools</p>			
	Revenue	2013-2014 Per Pupil Funding	Projected LEA ADM	Approximate funding for 2015-2016
	State Funds	\$4,582.77	400	\$1,833,108.00
Local Funds	\$2,543.00	400	\$1,017,200.00	
Federal EC Funds	\$3,743.48	48	\$179,687.04	
Totals			\$3,029,995.04	
<p>LEA #3 920 - Wake County Schools</p>				
Revenue	2013-2014 Per Pupil Funding	Projected LEA ADM	Approximate funding for 2015-2016	
State Funds	\$4,539.11	400	\$1,815,644.00	
Local Funds	\$2,048.00	400	\$819,200.00	
Federal EC Funds	\$3,743.48	48	\$179,687.04	
Totals			\$2,814,531.04	

Total Budget: Revenue Projections 2015-16 through 2019-2020

INCOME: REVENUE PROJECTIONS	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
-State ADM Funds	\$4,580,110	\$6,870,165	\$9,160,220	\$11,450,275	\$13,740,330
-Local Per Pupil Funds	\$2,359,200	\$3,538,800	\$4,718,400	\$5,898,000	\$7,077,600
-Exceptional Children Federal Funds	\$445,268	\$667,903	\$890,537	\$1,113,171	\$1,335,805
-Other Funds*	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
-Working Capital*	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Z - TOTAL REVENUE	\$7,384,578	\$11,076,868	\$14,769,157	\$18,461,446	\$22,153,735

***If the applicant is depending on other funding sources or working capital to balance the operating budget, please provide documentation such as signed statements from donors, foundations, bank documents, etc., on the commitment of these funds. If these figures are loans, the repayment needs to be explained in the narrative and found within the budget projections.**

Assurances are needed to confirm the commitment of these additional sources of revenue. Please include these as Appendix R.

Personnel Budget: Expenditure Projections 2015-16 through 2019-2020

The personnel list below may be amended to meet the staffing of individual charter schools: This list should align with the projected staff located in the Operations Plan (Appendix M).

BUDGET EXPENDITURE PROJECTIONS Personnel	2015-2016			2016-2017			2017-2018			2018-2019			2019-2020		
	Num Staff	Avg Salary	Total salary	FTE	Avg Salary	Total salary	FTE	Avg Salary	Total salary	FTE	Avg Salary	Total salary	FTE	Avg Salary	Total salary
Administrative & Support Personnel:															
Principal	1	\$92,000	\$92,000	1	\$92,000	\$92,000	1	\$92,000	\$92,000	1	\$92,000	\$92,000	1	\$92,000	\$92,000
Assistant Principal	1	\$68,250	\$68,250	2	\$68,250	\$136,500	3	\$68,250	\$204,750	4	\$68,250	\$273,000	4	\$68,250	\$273,000
Administrative Assistant	2	\$32,760	\$65,520	3	\$32,760	\$98,280	5	\$32,760	\$163,800	6	\$32,760	\$196,560	7	\$32,760	\$229,320
A - Total Admin and Support:	4	\$193,010	\$225,770	6	\$193,010	\$326,780	9	\$193,010	\$460,550	11	\$193,010	\$561,560	12	\$193,010	\$594,320
Instructional Personnel:															
Teacher	27	\$39,900	\$1,077,300	40	\$39,900	\$1,596,000	54	\$39,900	\$2,154,600	67	\$39,900	\$2,673,300	81	\$39,900	\$3,231,900
Manager Of Counseling	1	\$60,500	\$60,500	1	\$60,500	\$60,500	1	\$60,500	\$60,500	1	\$60,500	\$60,500	1	\$60,500	\$60,500
Advisory Teacher/School Counselor	4	\$36,750	\$147,000	6	\$36,750	\$220,500	8	\$36,750	\$294,000	10	\$36,750	\$367,500	12	\$36,750	\$441,000
Manager Of Special Education	1	\$66,000	\$66,000	1	\$66,000	\$66,000	1	\$66,000	\$66,000	1	\$66,000	\$66,000	1	\$66,000	\$66,000
Special Education Teacher	2	\$39,900	\$79,800	3	\$39,900	\$119,700	4	\$39,900	\$159,600	6	\$39,900	\$239,400	7	\$39,900	\$279,300
B - Total Instructional Personnel:	35	\$243,050	\$1,430,600	51	\$243,050	\$2,062,700	68	\$243,050	\$2,734,700	85	\$243,050	\$3,406,700	102	\$243,050	\$4,078,700
A+B = C - Total Admin, Support and Instructional Personnel:	39	\$436,060	\$1,656,370	57	\$436,060	\$2,389,480	77	\$436,060	\$3,195,250	96	\$436,060	\$3,968,260	114	\$436,060	\$4,673,020
Administrative & Support Benefits															
Health Insurance	4	\$9,031	\$36,124	6	\$8,714	\$52,284	9	\$8,188	\$73,692	11	\$8,168	\$89,848	12	\$7,924	\$95,088
Retirement Plan--Other	4	\$565	\$2,260	6	\$545	\$3,270	9	\$512	\$4,608	11	\$511	\$5,621	12	\$495	\$5,940

North Carolina Connections Academy

Life Insurance	4	\$282	\$1,128	6	\$272	\$1,632	9	\$256	\$2,304	11	\$255	\$2,805	12	\$248	\$2,976
Disability	4	\$1,044	\$4,176	6	\$1,008	\$6,048	9	\$947	\$8,523	11	\$944	\$10,384	12	\$916	\$10,992
Medicare	4	\$819	\$3,276	6	\$790	\$4,740	9	\$742	\$6,678	11	\$740	\$8,140	12	\$718	\$8,616
Social Security	4	\$3,500	\$14,000	6	\$3,377	\$20,262	9	\$3,173	\$28,557	11	\$3,165	\$34,815	12	\$3,071	\$36,852
D - Total Admin and Support Benefits:	24	\$15,241	\$60,964	36	\$14,706	\$88,236	54	\$13,818	\$124,362	66	\$13,783	\$151,613	72	\$13,372	\$160,464
Instructional Personnel Benefits:															
Health Insurance	35	\$6,540	\$228,900	51	\$6,471	\$330,021	68	\$6,435	\$437,580	85	\$6,413	\$545,105	102	\$6,398	\$652,596
Retirement Plan--Other	35	\$409	\$14,315	51	\$404	\$20,604	68	\$402	\$27,336	85	\$401	\$34,085	102	\$400	\$40,800
Social Security	35	\$204	\$7,140	51	\$202	\$10,302	68	\$201	\$13,668	85	\$200	\$17,000	102	\$200	\$20,400
Disability	35	\$756	\$26,460	51	\$748	\$38,148	68	\$744	\$50,592	85	\$741	\$62,985	102	\$740	\$75,480
Medicare	35	\$593	\$20,755	51	\$586	\$29,886	68	\$583	\$39,644	85	\$581	\$49,385	102	\$580	\$59,160
Life Insurance	35	\$2,534	\$88,690	51	\$2,508	\$127,908	68	\$2,493	\$169,524	85	\$2,485	\$211,225	102	\$2,479	\$252,858
E - Total Instructional Personnel Benefits:	210	\$11,036	\$386,260	306	\$10,919	\$556,869	408	\$10,858	\$738,344	510	\$10,821	\$919,785	612	\$10,797	\$1,101,294
D+E = F - Total Personnel Benefits	234	\$26,277	\$447,224	342	\$25,625	\$645,105	462	\$24,676	\$862,706	576	\$24,604	\$1,071,398	684	\$24,169	\$1,261,758
A+D = G - Total Admin and Support Personnel (Salary & Benefits)	28	\$1,813,978	\$286,734	42	\$2,448,001	\$415,016	63	\$3,119,769	\$584,912	77	\$3,875,949	\$713,173	84	\$4,489,494	\$754,784
B+E = H - Total Instructional Personnel (Salary & Benefits)	245	\$3,903,367	\$1,816,860	357	\$5,729,242	\$2,619,569	476	\$7,556,271	\$3,473,044	595	\$9,445,824	\$4,326,485	714	\$11,285,390	\$5,179,994
G+H = J - TOTAL PERSONNEL	273	\$5,717,345	\$2,103,594	399	\$8,177,243	\$3,034,585	539	\$10,676,040	\$4,057,956	672	\$13,321,773	\$5,039,658	798	\$15,774,884	\$5,934,778

Operations Budget: Expenditure Projections 2015-16 through 2019-2020

BUDGET OPERATIONS EXPENDITURE PROJECTIONS		2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
	Administrative & Support:					
Office:	Furniture & Equipment	\$52,763	\$52,763	\$52,763	\$85,670	\$85,670
	Office Supplies	\$20,000	\$30,000	\$40,000	\$50,000	\$60,000
	Copier & Reproduction	\$5,000	\$7,500	\$10,000	\$12,500	\$15,000
	Computers & Software	\$2,400	\$3,600	\$5,400	\$6,600	\$7,200
	Communications & Telephone	\$30,000	\$35,000	\$40,000	\$70,000	\$70,000
	Postage	\$52,550	\$78,825	\$105,100	\$131,375	\$157,650
Management Company	School Administration	\$451,055	\$676,583	\$902,110	\$1,127,638	\$1,353,165
	Enrollment & Records Management	\$54,000	\$81,000	\$108,000	\$135,000	\$162,000
	Accounting & Regulatory Reporting	\$50,000	\$75,000	\$100,000	\$125,000	\$150,000
	Marketing Services	\$69,393	\$104,090	\$138,786	\$173,483	\$208,179
	Human Resources Support	\$48,750	\$71,250	\$96,250	\$120,000	\$142,500
	Treasury Services	\$104,090	\$156,134	\$208,179	\$260,224	\$312,269
	Internet Subsidy Payment Processing	\$25,626	\$38,440	\$51,253	\$64,066	\$76,879
	Technical Support & Repairs	\$150,000	\$225,000	\$300,000	\$375,000	\$450,000
	Facility Support Services	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$30,000	\$30,000
Professional Contract	Legal Counsel	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
	Independent Auditor	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000
	School Financial Services	\$48,000	\$48,000	\$48,000	\$48,000	\$48,000
	Staff Recruiting	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000
Facilities	Full Service Lease	\$120,000	\$120,000	\$120,000	\$180,000	\$180,000
	Maintenance	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$7,500	\$7,500
Other	Community Outreach	\$200,000	\$300,000	\$400,000	\$500,000	\$600,000
	Travel & Conferences	\$50,000	\$75,000	\$125,000	\$125,000	\$125,000
	Banking Fees	\$600	\$600	\$600	\$600	\$600
	Dues	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
	D&O Insurance	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$1,500
	Accreditation	\$10,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
		\$1,605,727	\$2,240,285	\$2,912,941	\$3,669,156	\$4,283,112
	K - TOTAL Administrative & Support Operations					
	Instructional:					
Classroom Technology	Computers & Software: Instructional	\$21,000	\$30,600	\$40,800	\$51,000	\$61,200
	Computers & Software: Students	\$589,408	\$884,112	\$1,178,815	\$1,473,519	\$1,768,223

North Carolina Connections Academy

	Education Management System	\$600,000	\$900,000	\$1,200,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,800,000
Instructional Contract	Special Education Services	\$445,268	\$667,903	\$890,537	\$1,113,171	\$1,335,805
	Staff Development	\$15,000	\$22,500	\$35,000	\$35,000	\$35,000
Books And Supplies	Tangible And Intangible Instructional Materials	\$1,451,250	\$2,176,875	\$2,902,500	\$3,628,125	\$4,353,750
	School Curriculum Supplies	\$16,500	\$24,500	\$33,000	\$41,500	\$50,000
	Supplemental Curriculum	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$100,000	\$150,000
Management Company	Educational Resource Center	\$126,000	\$189,000	\$252,000	\$315,000	\$378,000
	Special Ed Oversight & High Cost Protection	\$173,483	\$260,224	\$346,966	\$433,707	\$520,448
Other	Testing & Assessment	\$55,000	\$85,000	\$110,000	\$110,000	\$110,000
	Student Internet Subsidy	\$156,372	\$234,559	\$312,745	\$390,931	\$469,117
	L - TOTAL Instructional Operations	\$3,649,281	\$5,475,273	\$7,302,363	\$9,191,953	\$11,031,543
	K+L = M - TOTAL OPERATIONS	\$5,255,008	\$7,715,558	\$10,215,304	\$12,861,109	\$15,314,655

Overall Budget:

BUDGET OPERATIONS EXPENDITURE PROJECTIONS	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
J - TOTAL PERSONNEL	\$2,103,594	\$3,034,585	\$4,057,956	\$5,039,658	\$5,934,778
M - TOTAL OPERATIONS	\$5,255,008	\$7,715,558	\$10,215,304	\$12,861,109	\$15,314,655
J+ M =N TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$7,358,602	\$10,750,143	\$14,273,260	\$17,900,767	\$21,249,433
Z - TOTAL REVENUE	\$7,384,578	\$11,076,868	\$14,769,157	\$18,461,446	\$22,153,735
Z - N = SURPLUS / (DEFICIT)	\$25,976	\$326,725	\$495,897	\$560,679	\$904,302

Budget Narrative: (No more than one and a half pages)

Please include additional information that showcases all assumptions for your budgetary calculations.

1. *How was the student enrollment number projected?*

Provide an explanation as to why you believe there is a demand for the school that will meet this enrollment projection.

Provide the break-even point of student enrollment.

The enrollment projections are conservative based upon the demand in North Carolina for full-time virtual education and the experience that similar statewide schools have had in other states. There is strong demand for the school throughout North Carolina. Prior to any marketing or parental outreach efforts, over 4,200 families have expressed interest in learning more about the program. In addition, 24 information sessions were held in October and November 2013 of which 18 were conducted online and six were in-person events in North Carolina communities (Forsyth, Guilford, Durham, Wake, Union, and Mecklenburg counties). During each information session, parents, students, and community stakeholders were given an opportunity to ask questions about the proposed public charter school as well as learn more about the school's proposed curriculum, courses, student support services, and student activity clubs.

To offer the level of services detailed in this application, the break-even point of student enrollment will be 1,000 students.

Discuss the school's contingency plan to meet financial needs if anticipated revenues are not received or are lower than estimated.

If financial circumstances warrant it, NCCA will implement a policy of hiring staff only as enrollment requires. NCCA will make wise financial decisions while ensuring students' academic needs are met.

NCCA anticipates contracting for services on a per pupil basis from Connections, so as to make as many expenses of the school variable instead of fixed. This will ensure the majority of expenses will change with enrollment. If it is determined that the school will not be able to meet its financial obligations to Connections as a result of decreased revenue, Connections will provide service credits (discounts on products and services) to protect NCCA against a deficit.

NCCA will build a reserve fund of a reasonable size if unobligated funding is available. This rainy day fund will be available when unexpected expenses are incurred or revenue shortfalls occur. Additionally, the Governing Board has established a goal to maintain a general fund surplus.

Does the budget rely on sources of funds other than state, county, and federal (e.g. loans, donations etc.)? If so, please provide the source and amount. Be sure that the appropriate assurances documentation is provided in the appendices

The budget does not rely on sources of funds other than state ADM funds, local per pupil funds, and exceptional children federal funds.

Provide the student to teacher ratio that the budget is built on.

30:1

- 2. Does the school intend to contract for services such as student accounting and financial services, exceptional children instructional support, custodial etc. Describe the criteria and procedures for the selection of contractors and large purchases.*

NCCA intends to contract with the North Carolina Public Charter School Association (NCPCSA) for business, financial, and accounting services. NCPCSA will report directly to the Governing Board and be independent of Connections. Each month, NCPCSA will prepare for the Governing Board a set of detailed financial statements that will include a revenue and expense statement, a balance sheet, invoice detail (vendor, amount, date, purchase), any grant fund expenditures, cash receipts from all sources, and a transaction listing of all activity in the school's bank account.

In addition, NCCA anticipates contracting with Rives and Associates (<http://rivescpa.com/>) for auditing services. Rives and Associates has a number of public school and charter school clients and is well-acquainted with the charter school landscape in North Carolina. Rives and Associates has offices in Raleigh, Charlotte, and Lexington.

The Governing Board intends to contract with Connections, a proven and effective Education Services Provider (ESP), for the benefit of a smooth school start up, quality academic materials for students, and national best practices expertise and guidance. Connections has a proven record of success collaborating with public virtual schools and consistent strong ratings from parents. Schools supported by Connections have proven acceptance of students to highly regarded colleges and universities, strong independent governing boards who make decisions about the school, and passionate testimonials from families about their successful experience. Connections will be a critical partner in achieving the school's mission, with strong oversight by the Governing Board, to help each student maximize his/her potential, meet high performance standards through a uniquely individualized learning program for students in grades 6-12 throughout North Carolina who need an alternative to the traditional classroom. The Governing Board intends to contract with Connections for exceptional children instructional support.

- 3. Explain how the budget aligns with the school's mission, curricular offerings, transportation plans, and facility needs.*

The Governing Board will budget responsibly, investing in teachers, technology, and instructional materials that improve student learning. In order to achieve its mission, the school must remain fiscally sound. NCCA provides a full-time school experience which includes more than just courses. Each student will have a progression plan focused on career and

college readiness. Beginning in grade 9, guidance counselors work with each student individually on graduation plans with a focus on appropriate courses, credits, and post-secondary planning. Students at all grade levels also participate in clubs, activities, and electives to complete the full-school experience.

NCCA will reach students who need a flexible schedule and for whom a cutting-edge virtual approach provides the best pathway to successful completion of their education program. NCCA will promote academic and emotional success for every learner through an individualized learning program combining the best in virtual education with real and engaging connections among students, family, teachers, and the community. The NCCA approach will provide students with the opportunity for enrollment in a public school outside of the traditional classroom on a full-time basis. NCCA is not a course program; it is a whole-school experience for its students with academic, behavioral, emotional, and career support.

NCCA will be a public charter school and as such, should receive funding using the methodology prescribed by North Carolina Code of Laws 115C-238.29H. This funding level is appropriate for students enrolled in a full-time virtual school that is held to the same accountability standards as all other charter schools. This will allow for a sustainable and fiscally- and educationally-responsible public charter school.

4. What percentage of expenditures will be the school's goal for a general fund balance?

Describe how the school will develop the fund balance.

The Governing Board has developed a plan that will increase the school's general fund balance as enrollment grows. As the school expands, economies of scale will be achieved. NCCA's contingency reserve will increase and the Governing Board will have the available resources to meet future obligations of the school. The Governing Board has set a goal to establish a general fund balance of seven percent of total operating expenses by its fifth year of operations, subject to availability of funds.

The Governing Board will monitor the school's financial position to ensure that available funds are appropriately designated in a manner that will ensure the school's continuing financial viability. Additionally, the Governing Board intends to negotiate an agreement with Connections that will allow the school to reimburse Connections only as funding becomes available. This unique arrangement will allow the Governing Board to allocate additional funds towards academic achievement while maintaining a reserve that will help ensure the ongoing success of the school.

5. Provide a description of proposed financing structure. Include financing of facilities, other asset financing and leases.

The Governing Board does not intend on securing any long-term debt to finance the purchase of a school facility. The school's virtual education model requires only leased office space as the teaching/learning center for both the teachers and administrators to conduct school operations. This significantly reduces financial risks associated with large debt obligations that are often assumed by traditional schools.

The Governing Board intends on contracting with Connections for use of

various equipment needed by the school. As part of the arrangement, the school has the option to pay for the use of technology devices (including repairs, software installation, etc.) without bearing the risks associated with purchasing and managing such equipment. Exercising this option will allow NCCA to incur technology costs only when they are absolutely needed rather than purchasing technology to meet the anticipated needs of teachers and enrolled students. Leases for other office equipment (copiers, postage machines, etc.) will be managed by Connections and reimbursed by NCCA, at cost, when funds are available to the school.

7. *Will the school have assets from other sources (e.g. building, furniture, chairs, computers, etc.)? If yes, please provide a list. Note which are secured and which are anticipated, and include evidence of commitment for any assets on which the school's core operation depends*

NCCA will need furniture and equipment to outfit the leased facility that will be used by both teachers and administrators. The Governing Board does not intend to purchase a building (as described previously) and has no outstanding commitments for any of the anticipated fixed asset purchases at this time.

Financial Compliance: (No more than a half of a page)

How will the school ensure adequate internal controls, including segregation of duties, safeguarding of assets, accurate and adequate recording keeping?

NCCA will follow a financial and accounting plan that is compliant with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) and will provide an accurate accounting of all of its finances, ensure sufficient information for audit purposes, and provide data in the format needed for accurate and timely reporting.

NCCA intends to contract with North Carolina Public Charter School Association (NCPCSA) for business, financial, and accounting services. NCPCSA will report directly to the Governing Board, working alongside the principal, and be independent of Connections. Developing NCCA's annual budget will be an iterative process incorporating input from key stakeholders, including NCPCSA, the principal, and designated members of the Governing Board. A preliminary budget based on initial assumptions will be presented by NCPCSA to the Governing Board and will be approved by the Governing Board before the start of the school year. This budget will then be compared to actual and forecasted results on a monthly basis.

NCCA will use industry-standard accounting software to ensure proper bookkeeping. NCCA will also establish policies and procedures and will institute rigorous financial controls including the following.

*NCCA will develop and maintain simple check request and purchase order forms to document the authorization of non-payroll expenditures. All proposed expenditures must be approved by a designee of the Governing Board. NCPCSA will review the proposed expenditure for approval and to determine whether it is consistent with the Governing Board's adopted budget. Supporting documentation will be required for all expenditures.

* To ensure fiscal responsibility and compliance, the Governing Board will meet regularly to review the operations and financial performance of the school.

* NCCA will maintain its accounts at a federally insured commercial bank or credit union. Funds will be deposited in non-speculative accounts including federally-insured savings or checking accounts or invested in non-speculative federally-backed instruments. Access to these accounts will be limited to individuals designated by the Governing Board.

* Each month, NCCA will produce a set of detailed financial statements that include a statement of activities, a balance sheet, bank reconciliations, invoice detail, payroll registers, any grant fund expenditures, cash receipts from all sources, and a transaction listing of all activity. The Treasurer of the Governing Board will be provided with access to such financial documents for review as an increased measure of oversight and governance.

Once NCCA's charter is approved, the Governing Board will enter into a contract with Rives and Associates to conduct an audit. The annual audit will be completed and filed with the Local Government Commission (LGC) and

Department of Public Instruction by October 31, beginning with October 31 after the first year of operations. The audit will be conducted in accordance with Government Auditing Standards and will meet the specific compliance requirements set forth by North Carolina.

Provide any known or possible related party transactions (relationship, description of transaction and estimated dollars involved)

None known.

Provide the name and contact information of the independent audit firm who will conduct the annual financial statement audit. If a firm has yet to be identified please list the firms the board has investigated.

Rives and Associates, 702 Oberlin Road, Suite 410, Raleigh, NC 27605, phone (919) 832-6848, fax (919) 832-7288.

VI. AGREEMENT PAGE

Application Fee:

Pursuant to § 115C-238.29B(e) the charter school applicant must submit a \$500 application fee to the Office of Charter Schools. The applicant must submit their application fee by the December 6, 2013 5:00 pm EST deadline. Payments will be accepted in the form of a check only. Cash or credit cards are not accepted.

**Application Note: The applicant must mail the check along with a copy of the proposed charter LOI to be received before or on the due date of December 6, 2013 5:00 pm EST. Failure to submit payment by the stipulated timeline to the Office of Charter Schools will deem the application incomplete.*

Payments should be made payable to North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

*North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
Office Of Charter Schools
6303 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-6303*

I understand the requirements pursuant to G.S. 115C-238.29B(e).

bsetser

Date: 12/06/2013

Applicant Signature:

The foregoing application is submitted on behalf of North Carolina Connections Academy (*name of non-profit corporation or individuals submitting application*). The undersigned has read the application and hereby declares that the information contained in it is true and accurate to the best of his/her information and belief. The undersigned further represents that the applicant has read the Charter School Law and agrees to be governed by it, other applicable laws, and SBE regulations.

Print/Type Name: bsetser

Board Position: Bryan Setser Board President

Signature: _____

Date: 12/06/2013

Sworn to and subscribed before me this
_____ day of _____, 20____.

Notary Public

Official Seal

My commission expires: _____, 20____.

