



South Carolina Connections Academy

Charter School Application

Submitted to the
South Carolina Public
Charter School District

October 11, 2007
REVISED December 4, 2007
and January 3, 2008

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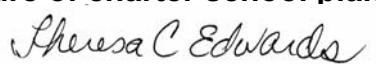


Charter School Application Cover Page

FOR SDE USE

Date Rec'd _____

Initials of
Receiver

Name of Proposed Charter School:	South Carolina Connections Academy
School Address (if known):	To be determined
Name of Applicant group:	South Carolina Connections Academy Charter Committee
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Grade Levels of Charter School (or Age Groupings if the school will not use grades to distinguish students):	
Grades K-12	
Sponsor (local school district board or SCPCSD):	
South Carolina Public Charter School District	
Signature of charter school planning committee chair:	
 _____ Signature	October 10, 2007 _____ Date

Application Checklist

Applicant: Be sure that you have included each of the following as part of your application package.











-  **Application Cover Page (signed and complete)**
-  **Table of Contents**
-  **Application Narrative**
-  **Student Enrollment Projection (Appendix A)**
-  **Five-Year Budget (Appendix I)**
-  **Documentation from State Department of Education of estimated revenues (Appendix J)**
-  **Articles of incorporation, bylaws, and proof of South Carolina non-profit corporation status (Appendix K)**
-  **Documentation of insurability and estimate of cost of insurance (Appendix O)**
-  **Statement of Assurances (signed and included in Narrative)**
-  **Other documents necessary to respond to application components (Appendices B-P)**

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Introduction: Overview, Definitions, and Compliance with H3097

Overview: South Carolina Connections Academy is a proposed public virtual charter school whose purpose is to provide individualized instruction tailored to the learning needs of K-12 students throughout South Carolina who seek an alternative to the traditional classroom. The school was developed to meet the aspirations of South Carolina and its people as embodied in the South Carolina Charter Schools Act and in H3097, the legislation passed in 2007 to amend to allow high-quality virtual charter schools in South Carolina.

The founders of South Carolina Connections Academy are South Carolina parents, educators, and community leaders who are passionate about the potential of this personalized virtual learning approach as an educational choice for students currently under-served. A list of these Charter Committee members, who will serve as the Interim Governing Board for the school, is shown along with their affiliations and locations in Section C; resumes for members are shown in Appendix C.

The diverse students to be served by South Carolina Connections Academy truly do have unique educational needs. They may be special education students or children who simply learn differently; gifted or struggling or both; grappling with chronic illness or training for the Olympics; living in an isolated rural area with limited access to rich curriculum resources or in an urban neighborhood facing school safety issues. They may attend a school designated as low-performing under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and seek a transfer. For myriad reasons, these students are not thriving in the typical classroom setting but can reach their full potential in a personalized virtual school environment.

Working outside the traditional classroom under the daily guidance of South Carolina-certified, Highly Qualified teachers with whom they interact via technology and other means, South Carolina Connections Academy students benefit from a rigorous curriculum that is aligned to South Carolina Academic Standards and Benchmarks and is the first national program of its kind to be accredited by the Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation (CITA).¹ The South Carolina Connections Academy curriculum combines the best in print and technology, delivered via a Learning Management System that ensures complete accountability and following a Personalized Learning Plan developed for each student. Working in partnership with and under the direction of the school's licensed, professional South Carolina teachers will be each student's "Learning Coach" – a face-to-face guide who may be a parent/extended family member or another similarly qualified individual. South Carolina Connections Academy will also provide students with community socialization activities and ensure access to all necessary technology. South Carolina Connections Academy students will participate in all required South Carolina state assessments at in-person, proctored locations as part of the school's fulfillment of the specific requirements of H3097.

South Carolina Connections Academy is a non-profit South Carolina corporation governed by an independent Governing Board (see Section G and Appendix K). To fulfill its vision for the school, the Board intends to contract with Connections Academy, LLC, a successful national provider of virtual public school curriculum, technology and

¹ The Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation (CITA) was created in 1996 by the regional associations which accredit schools and universities in the United States to provide customized accreditation protocols and standards for schools that cross the regions and for national and international schools around the world; see www.citaschools.org for more information about CITA.

management services that currently partners with schools in 13 states across the nation. (See Appendix L for a sample draft professional services contract with Connections Academy that the Governing Board will consider upon approval of the charter.)

South Carolina Connections Academy will be headquartered in the Columbia area -- to facilitate oversight by the South Carolina Public Charter School District, the state Department of Education, and the General Assembly -- but its virtual nature will make it available to students throughout the state. The school's Columbia headquarters will be the daily work location for the school Principal and many of the teaching staff, who will benefit from collegial accountability and ongoing professional development.

As shown in Appendix A, the goal of South Carolina Connections Academy is to open with up to 1,000 students in grades K-12 in Fall 2008 and grow to 3,000 students by its fifth year of operation. This is well below 1% of the state's total student population, so the impact on any individual school district will be minor. However, the difference that South Carolina Connections Academy can make for these under-served students is enormous.

Definition of Terms: The description of the South Carolina Connections Academy program that follows in this charter application integrates some unique terminology, as defined below:

- ***Learning Coach:*** A parent, extended family member, or similarly qualified adult designated by the parent/guardian who works in person with the South Carolina Connections Academy student under the guidance of the South Carolina-licensed

professional teacher. The Learning Coach and student interact with the teacher via telephone, WebMail (see below), LiveLesson™ (see below), and in-person meetings. The school provides ongoing training to help Learning Coaches carry out their important role while making optimum use of the available technology tools and professional teacher support to do so.

- ***Learning Management System (LMS):*** The platform for organizing and managing the entire South Carolina Connections Academy educational environment. This proprietary, web-based software delivers every assignment and tracks every activity (whether conducted online or offline), monitoring the completion of individual lessons as well as mastery of discrete skills and knowledge. The LMS operates within a very secure and robust technology infrastructure which protects all data from loss and intrusion while maintaining a safe environment in which students, parents, and teachers can interact with each other.
- ***LiveLesson™:*** A web conferencing tool that allows teachers to work synchronously (in real time) with small groups of students using voice over IP, chat, electronic whiteboard, and shared web surfing; based on Adobe® Connect™.
- ***Personalized Performance Learning™:*** The instructional model used by South Carolina Connections Academy, which includes a “Personalized Learning Plan” developed collaboratively by the teacher and Learning Coach for each student to maximize his or her achievement and tailoring of curriculum and instruction in keeping with this plan.
- ***Student Status/Escalation Process:*** South Carolina Connections Academy tracks and reports ongoing student attendance progress based on the objective numeric

data generated by the LMS including student contact with teachers, time-on-task, and completion of lessons and assessments. This highly accountable, proactive system is essential in a virtual environment to ensure that no child falls through the cracks. The student's status (On-Track, Approaching Alarm and Alarm) is displayed on the Learning Coach and teacher home pages for instant identification of potential problem areas.

- **Multi-tiered Intervention** – South Carolina Connections Academy employs a multi-tiered intervention model so that 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 school's Student Support Team meets on a weekly basis to discuss students who are struggling academically to develop an intervention plan and strategies for improvement.
- **Teachlets™**: Highly interactive, asynchronous graphic/video/audio tutorials at the beginning of many South Carolina Connections Academy lessons show students the concepts they will need to complete the lesson. Teachlets are created in Flash® (an industry-standard web animation protocol) to provide maximum media impact for minimum bandwidth. They are also provided on CD as a backup and to aid students working with dial-up Internet connections. This dual provision will be critical to serve students in South Carolina Connections Academy who do not have access to high speed connectivity and is a key differentiator to this school's ability to serve a diverse community.
- **WebMail**: The proprietary private email system included in the LMS. Because this system is "closed," South Carolina Connections Academy students, Learning

Coaches and teachers may only use it to communicate with each other, and are protected from spam, contact from strangers, and other mainstream email issues.

Compliance with H3097: H3097 is the ground-breaking legislation passed by the South Carolina General Assembly in 2007 to permit virtual charter schools. H3097 articulates the following requirements in Section 59-40-65.

H3097 Requirement	How South Carolina Connections Academy Complies	Details in this Charter Application
(A) If the governing body of a charter school offers as part of its curriculum a program of online or computer instruction, this information shall be included in the application and the governing body shall be required to: (1) provide each student enrolled in the program with a course or courses of online or computer instruction approved by the State Department of Education that must meet or exceed the South Carolina content and grade specific standards. Students enrolled in the program of online or computer instruction must receive all instructional materials required for the student's program;	The South Carolina Connections Academy curriculum meets or exceeds South Carolina content and grade-specific standards for grades K-12; sample documentation of alignment to these standards is included in Appendix F. The school's 350+ courses will be submitted for approval to the State Department of Education pursuant to the processes established for such approval. South Carolina Connections Academy will provide all instructional materials required for each student's program, including substantial physical materials delivered to the student's home and online materials provided via technology.	Section D Appendix F
(2) ensure that the persons who operate the program on a day-to-day basis comply with and carry out all applicable requirements, statutes, regulations, rules, and	Day-to-day operation of South Carolina Connections Academy will be carried out by the school's Highly Qualified, South Carolina certified staff, who will comply with all requirements, statutes, regulations, rules, and policies of	Throughout

<p>policies of the charter school;</p>	<p>the charter school, including policies adopted by the school's Governing Board.</p>	
<p>(3) ensure that each course offered through the program is taught by a teacher meeting the requirements of Section 59-40-50;</p>	<p>All South Carolina Connections Academy teachers will be certified to teach in South Carolina and will be Highly Qualified to teach their grade/subject as defined by No Child Left Behind.</p>	<p>Section H</p>
<p>(4) ensure that a parent or legal guardian of each student verifies the number of hours of educational activities completed by the student each school year;</p>	<p>The South Carolina Connections Academy Learning Management System (LMS) requires parents/legal guardians of students to complete a daily log of attendance hours, which are verified by the teacher based on student participation (defined as lesson completion, communication with teachers, etc.). In addition, the LMS closely monitors student performance in each course, providing an overall score and course-by-course gradebook which are updated in real time. Both attendance and performance metrics are displayed prominently in the LMS for parent, teacher, and administrator review, facilitating verification of the number of hours of educational activities completed by the student each year.</p>	<p>Definitions Section D Section F(3)</p>
<p>(5) adopt a plan by which it will provide: (a) frequent, ongoing monitoring to ensure and verify that each student is participating in the program, including proctored assessment(s) per semester in core subjects graded or evaluated by the teacher, and at least bi-weekly parent-teacher conferences</p>	<p>The South Carolina Connections Academy LMS closely tracks student participation in the program, including daily completion of lessons, communication with teachers, compliance with school requests, and so on.</p> <p>All assessments, including frequent quizzes, end of unit tests, and portfolio assignments, are graded and evaluated by the</p>	<p>Section D Section E</p>

in person or by telephone;	<p>student's teacher. Each semester, students will participate in at least one proctored assessment in core subjects.</p> <p>South Carolina Connections Academy requires a minimum bi-weekly parent-teacher conference by telephone or in person. This is in addition to frequent, often daily, teacher-parent and teacher-student communication via telephone, WebMail, LiveLesson, and in-person meetings.</p>	
(b) regular instructional opportunities in real time that are directly related to the school's curricular objectives, including, but not limited to, meetings with teachers and educational field trips and outings;	Real-time instructional opportunities at South Carolina Connections Academy include frequent LiveLessons, in which the teacher and one or more students interact in real time via web conferencing that includes two-way audio, video, and text chat; telephone conversations focusing on curricular issues; educational field trips and outings that are scheduled at least monthly; and meetings with teachers via technology or in person.	Definitions Section D
(c) verification of ongoing student attendance in the program;	As noted above, the South Carolina Connections Academy Learning Management System (LMS) requires parents/legal guardians of students to complete a daily log of attendance hours, which are verified by the teacher based on student participation (defined as lesson completion, communication with teachers, etc.).	Section F(3)
(d) verification of ongoing student progress and performance in each course as documented by	The South Carolina Connections Academy LMS closely monitors student progress and performance in each course, with scores	Section D Section E

ongoing assessments and examples of student coursework;	updated in real time in the student's gradebook and on the student, parent and teacher homepages. Student progress and performance are measured via ongoing assessments, both online and offline, and by portfolio samples of student coursework submitted to the teacher either in hard-copy (for the elementary grades) or online drop-box (for the secondary grades).	
(6) administer to all students in a proctored setting all applicable assessments as required by the South Carolina Education Accountability Act.	At in-person, proctored locations within reasonable driving distance of students' homes, South Carolina Connections Academy will administer assessments required by the South Carolina Education Accountability Act.	Section E
(B) Nothing in this section shall prohibit a charter school that provides a program of online or computer instruction from reimbursing families of enrolled students for costs associated with their Internet connection for use in the program.	South Carolina Connections Academy intends to provide, on a reimbursement basis, an Internet connection subsidy to help defray families' cost of Internet connection for use in the program. First priority for these reimbursements will go to families whose students qualify for Free or Reduced Lunch.	Section D
(C) A charter school shall provide no more than seventy-five percent of a student's core academic instruction in kindergarten through twelfth grade via an online or computer instruction program. The twenty-five percent of the student's core academic instruction may be met through the regular instructional opportunities outlined in subitem	As described above, South Carolina Connections Academy will provide many regular opportunities for <u>real-time interaction among students and their teachers</u> (which is how the South Carolina Department of Education has interpreted this section of H3097). Such interactions will be in-person physically, or "in-person" virtually, with multiple students participating in real-time or with student and teacher one-on-one in real time.	Section D

(A)(5)(b).	These interactions together will account for at least 25% of the student's core academic instruction. In addition, the South Carolina Connections Academy curriculum integrates very extensive off-line, non-computer materials for core academic instruction.	
(D) Charter school students may enroll in the South Carolina Virtual School Program pursuant to program requirements.	South Carolina Connections Academy appreciates the opportunity for its students to enroll in the South Carolina Virtual School Program.	
(E) Private or homeschool students choosing to take courses from a virtual charter school may not be provided instructional materials, or any other materials associated with receiving instruction through a program of online or computer instruction at the state's expense.	All students who enroll in South Carolina Connections Academy will be full-time public school students. South Carolina Connections Academy does not anticipate offering courses to students who are enrolled in private schools or homeschools.	Section B
(F) Only students enrolled in the charter school as a full-time student shall be reported in the charter school's average daily membership to the State Department of Education for the purposes of receiving state or federal funds. Private and homeschool students may not be included in the student weighted pupil units or average daily membership reported to the State Department of Education for the purposes of receiving state or federal funds.	All students who enroll in South Carolina Connections Academy will be full-time public school students, and only these students will be reported in the charter school's average daily membership to the State Department of Education for the purposes of receiving state or federal funds.	Section B Section F(3)

A. Charter School Mission Statement

Provide a clear and concise statement that defines the purposes and nature of the school in one or two sentences. The mission statement should indicate how the school seeks to make a difference in public education and must support the intent of the South Carolina Charter Schools Act.

South Carolina Connections Academy is a pioneering virtual public charter school whose mission is to maximize academic achievement for students in grades K-12 throughout the state of South Carolina who need an alternative to the traditional classroom. In partnership with parents and families, South Carolina Connections Academy will reach students for whom this innovative virtual approach provides the best pathway to school success. The school's belief is that all students can thrive through a standards-aligned, individualized learning program that combines the best in virtual education with unique technology-based teacher productivity tools and very real connections among students, family, teachers, and the community.

The South Carolina Connections Academy mission supports all the purposes of the South Carolina Charter Schools Act. With its unique integration of technology and individualization, South Carolina Connections Academy will:

- **Improve student learning** as quantified in the goals and objectives detailed in Section D-2.
- **Increase learning opportunities for students**, particularly those not currently well-served.
- **Encourage the use of a variety of productive teaching methods**, including cutting edge applications of technology to meet very specific student learning needs.

- **Establish new forms of accountability for schools** by using very detailed student learning data to guide instructional decisions while providing unprecedented transparency in the teaching and learning process.
- **Create new professional opportunities for teachers**, who are at the very center of the South Carolina Connections Academy virtual school model.
- **Assist South Carolina in reaching academic excellence** through a focus on improved achievement for students who are otherwise not thriving in the state's public education system.

While it addresses these purposes, South Carolina Connections Academy also furthers the General Assembly's intent that the Charter Law encourage cultural diversity, educational improvement, and academic excellence throughout South Carolina.

In addition to building the timeless skills students have always needed for success in school and in life – such as literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking – South Carolina Connections Academy is uniquely situated to prepare students for their Information Age future. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills has defined such skills as “self-directed learning” and “information and communications technology literacy” as those most crucial for students' success in the competitive global economy. National experts believe that virtual schools such as South Carolina Connections Academy are particularly adept at developing these 21st century skills.² As South Carolina charts its path for the future, a high-quality virtual public charter school such as South Carolina Connections Academy will be a valuable asset.

² “Virtual Schools and 21st Century Skills,” white paper by North American Council for Online Learning and the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, November 2006, www.nacol.org.

B. Admissions Policies and Procedures

Include a description of the school's admission policies and procedures.

1. Enrollment Procedures

Describe the proposed student enrollment policies and procedures. Include the following:

a. who will be eligible to attend the school,

Any South Carolina student in grades K-12 will be eligible to enroll in South Carolina Connections Academy as a full-time student. South Carolina Connections Academy will enroll any student who resides anywhere in South Carolina who submits a timely application as specified in the charter, and will not charge tuition. South Carolina Connections Academy will not discriminate against pupils on the basis of sex, race, religion, national origin, ancestry, creed, pregnancy, marital status, sexual orientation, or physical, mental, emotional, or learning disability or handicap in its education programs or activities, including its admissions policies and procedures. However, the school's enrollment/admissions process will include rigorous screening for verification of South Carolina residency (address check, etc.). All students who enroll in South Carolina Connections Academy will be full-time public school students.

South Carolina Connections Academy will actively recruit families that represent the full cultural, demographic and socioeconomic range of the state. See Section I(2) for a complete description of the South Carolina Connections Academy plan to inform families about its services and provide them an equal opportunity to enroll.

b. how the applications will be received and processed,

To apply for enrollment at South Carolina Connections Academy for their children, parents must complete a simple registration form online or on paper that collects their name, email address (if registering online), address, phone and student names. They also confirm that they meet the basic eligibility requirements for South Carolina Connections Academy (e.g., state residency and legal school age, as noted on the school's web site and through a link on the enrollment page) and that they have read and understood the program's regulatory requirements.

Families that provide an email address also receive an invitation to create a user account in the school's LMS. This is not required; the entire enrollment process can be completed by mail or fax. However it is very convenient for families who do have online access to use the LMS as they can easily follow their status since it is displayed at all times. Any family that provides an email address at registration and does not create a user account within 15 days receives a postcard reminding them that they can create their account and provides contact information if they have any questions or problems. This is done because some emails are directed into a family's "spam" folder and they may not be aware that that this has happened. Families that do not respond or make any contact within 30 days are removed from the school's roster and are sent a postcard advising them that they can reactivate their enrollment by contacting the school. (Note that all postcard notifications are sent out first class mail to ensure prompt receipt.)

Once a family has registered their student, additional information must be collected in order to place the student into his or her classes. There are three stages to the process.

- **Stage One:** In this stage, the student is being evaluated for placement into his or her grade and classes and is providing additional information for that purpose. Information is also collected in order to verify the student's eligibility based on South Carolina residency and age. To verify the shipping address (and to ensure that the student is currently a resident of South Carolina), documentation to support residency is collected. To ensure that a student's age is correct, a proof of age document must be submitted in order to confirm that the student is the age reported and to confirm that the individual registering the student is authorized to do so by right of being a birth or adoptive parent. If the name of the individual registering the student does not appear on the birth certificate, additional information such as a custody agreement would need to be provided. The additional information collected is used to place the student and to complete school records. Some families will receive a preliminary placement recommendation in this stage while others will be notified that more information is required. Families with missing information or who do not provide proof of residency or proof of age will be sent regular reminders by postcard to complete this information. Families are also sent additional information about the school upon their registration including a curriculum catalog, a DVD about the school's program and a school orientation that includes training on using the school's LMS. Upon

reviewing this information, some families decide that they are no longer interested. Most of these families do not follow through with contacting the school concerning their decision not to continue. Therefore, if families have not responded within 30 calendar days, they are sent a postcard reminder. If they have still not responded at 45 days, they are sent another postcard indicating that if they do not contact the school in 15 more days they will be removed from the school's roster. Then at 60 days, they are sent a final postcard notice that they have been taken off the school's roster but that they can reactivate their enrollment by contacting the school and completing the process.

- **Stage Two:** In this stage, the student's placement is pre-approved subject to the parent's verification in Stage Three. Parents are also contacted if additional information is required for placement such as additional placement tests or if the parent is requesting further evaluation. Further, if there are any problems with any documents or information the parents provided during Stage One, they are addressed at this time. For example, parents regularly use a fax in order to send documents and it is common for several pages to go through at once. Through the use of a "Document Cover Page," it can be determined what the parent intended to send and what actually came through. Parents receive a postcard notification about what was not received as well as any other problems, such as illegible handwriting or other missing information. As in the first stage, if families have not resolved the issue within 30 calendar days, they are sent a postcard reminder. If they have still not

responded at 45 calendar days, they are sent another postcard indicating that if they do not contact the school in 15 more days they will be removed from the school's roster. Then at 60 calendar days, they are sent a final postcard notice that they have been taken off the school's roster but that they can reactivate their enrollment by contacting the school and completing the process.

- **Stage Three:** In this stage, the parents will approve their student's final placement and shipping of their materials. Parents also need to confirm that they still intend for the student to start their classes. This is called "final confirmation" and parents can complete it online or by calling an 800 number. Parents can see online at any time that they are ready for confirmation by logging into the school's LMS. They can also call and inquire as to their stage at any time. Further, parents receive a postcard notification as soon as they are ready for final confirmation telling them to go online or call to confirm. If after all this, the parents still do not complete the confirmation, then after 30 days, they are notified by postcard that they have been removed from the school's roster but may reinstate their enrollment by contacting the school. In addition, after the start of the school year, parents are also contacted by phone with a reminder to confirm.
- **Stage Four:** After the final confirmation, students are ready to start their class work. Even students who have not received their physical materials are generally able to start class without delay as the first two weeks of content for most courses is also available online. Note that students will not be able to

complete their lessons and report attendance until the first day of the school calendar (see Appendix G).

c. how a lottery will be conducted for the first and subsequent years of operation if applications exceed the capacity, and

As a virtual charter school, South Carolina Connections Academy is not subject to the same facility space restrictions that a brick-and-mortar charter school might face in accommodating as many students as may wish to attend. The total projected enrollment and enrollment levels by grade for each year shown in Appendix A, represent a reasonable estimate of the demand for a high-quality virtual charter school program throughout the state of South Carolina. Should the number of applicants exceed these projections for the school as a whole or for particular grades, the school will conduct a lottery.

~~A draft lottery policy is shown in Appendix B; the~~ South Carolina Connections Academy will observe the following lottery policy, which Governing Board ~~will revise and adopt its final lottery policy prior to beginning student recruitment. The lottery policy to be adopted by the Board will comply~~ complies with the South Carolina Charter Schools Law while following specific guidance established on this topic by the US Department of Education ~~(see below).~~

Lottery Policy and Procedures

South Carolina Connections Academy is subject to enrollment limits for the school as a whole or for particular grade ranges. To manage these limits, the Governing Board will set an initial application deadline each year that will be

between May and August; if the number of applicants by this deadline exceeds the number of spaces available for enrollment, a lottery will be used to select students for enrollment. (Students who were enrolled in the school in the prior year, and have indicated their intent to return, will be considered exempt from the lottery process and, as such, will be deemed to have been admitted to the charter school already.)

The schedule of the lottery, if needed, will be set by the Governing Board in conjunction with the application deadline. The lottery will include all students who submit an enrollment application and have been placed in grade level by the deadline. Based on available openings, South Carolina Connections Academy will utilize a random number generator to select students from this group list within the grade range categories listed below:

- K-3
- 4-6
- 7-8
- 9-12

Within these grade ranges, the school will provide priority enrollment for:

- Siblings of students who are presently registered to return to the school and were enrolled in the school in the prior year.
- Children of South Carolina Connections Academy employees.

The lottery will be held in a public forum on a specified, publicly announced date and time with at least one school administrative staff member, one

Governing Board member, and one outside observer in attendance. A waiting list in lottery drawing order will be formed of students who were not selected through the lottery. Students selected in the lottery will have 30 days to complete the entire enrollment process; the slots of those who do not complete the process within that timeframe will be opened to students on the waiting list.

d. whether priority enrollment will be granted to any specific groups of students.

If student demand requires South Carolina Connections Academy to implement a lottery, the lottery will provide for a random selection process by which all applicants who have completed the application process by a specified, publicly announced deadline are given an equal chance of being

admitted to the charter school, with the exception that the school shall:

- ~~Exempt from the lottery~~ give enrollment preference to (1) students who were enrolled in the school in the prior year (once enrolled, students will not be required to reapply, but will need to provide notification that they intend to return to the school for the next grade according to the terms of the Student Handbook);
- Give enrollment preference to (2) siblings of students already enrolled in the school; and (3) children of charter school employees.

~~The lottery will be held in a public forum on a specified, publicly announced date and time with at least one school administrative staff member, one Governing Board member, and one outside observer in attendance. The lottery will be facilitated by a randomizing software procedure run in real time at the lottery session. A waiting list will be formed of students who were not selected through the lottery.~~

2. Students Outside the District

South Carolina Connections Academy seeks authorization by the SCPCSD to serve the statewide district as a statewide virtual charter school. Therefore, this section does not apply to South Carolina Connections Academy unless otherwise determined by future SCPCSD policy and procedures. .

If the school plans to enroll out-of-district students, provide the following information:

a. estimated percentage of out-of-district enrollment,

Not applicable

- b. approval provisions for receiving school district if the out-of-district enrollment is expected to be greater than 20 percent,**

Not applicable

- c. notification of the sending school district of transferring students, and**

South Carolina Connections Academy will work with the South Carolina

Department of Education and SCPCSD to establish the most efficient method

for notifying districts of students' enrollment in the school. As part of the

enrollment process described above, South Carolina Connections Academy

does have a Notification of Enrollment/Records Request form that may serve

this function.

- d. approval provisions for the sending district if more than 20 percent of the school's enrollment is from a district other than the school's sponsor.**

Not applicable

3. Student Appeals Process

Describe the appeals process, including appeal to the local school board of trustees, that will be offered to a student that is denied admission for a reason other than the results of a lottery.

Until it reaches its enrollment limits and implements a lottery process as defined

above, South Carolina Connections Academy does not anticipate denying

admission to any student who documents South Carolina residency and who is of

age to attend school in grades K-12 according to state law. Should a student

who is denied admission seek to appeal that denial, she or he will be offered the

opportunity to appeal directly to the SCPCSD. The decision of the SCPCSD shall

be considered binding on both the student and the charter school.

C. Support for Formation of the Charter School

1. Charter Committee

Please provide the names and addresses of committee members. Summarize each member's experience and qualifications. The application must include evidence that an adequate number of parents, teachers, pupils or any combination of them support the formation of the charter school. The charter committee must include at least one teacher.

The South Carolina Connections Academy Charter Committee is made up of the following members. Their complete resumes are provided in Appendix C.

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School Counselor

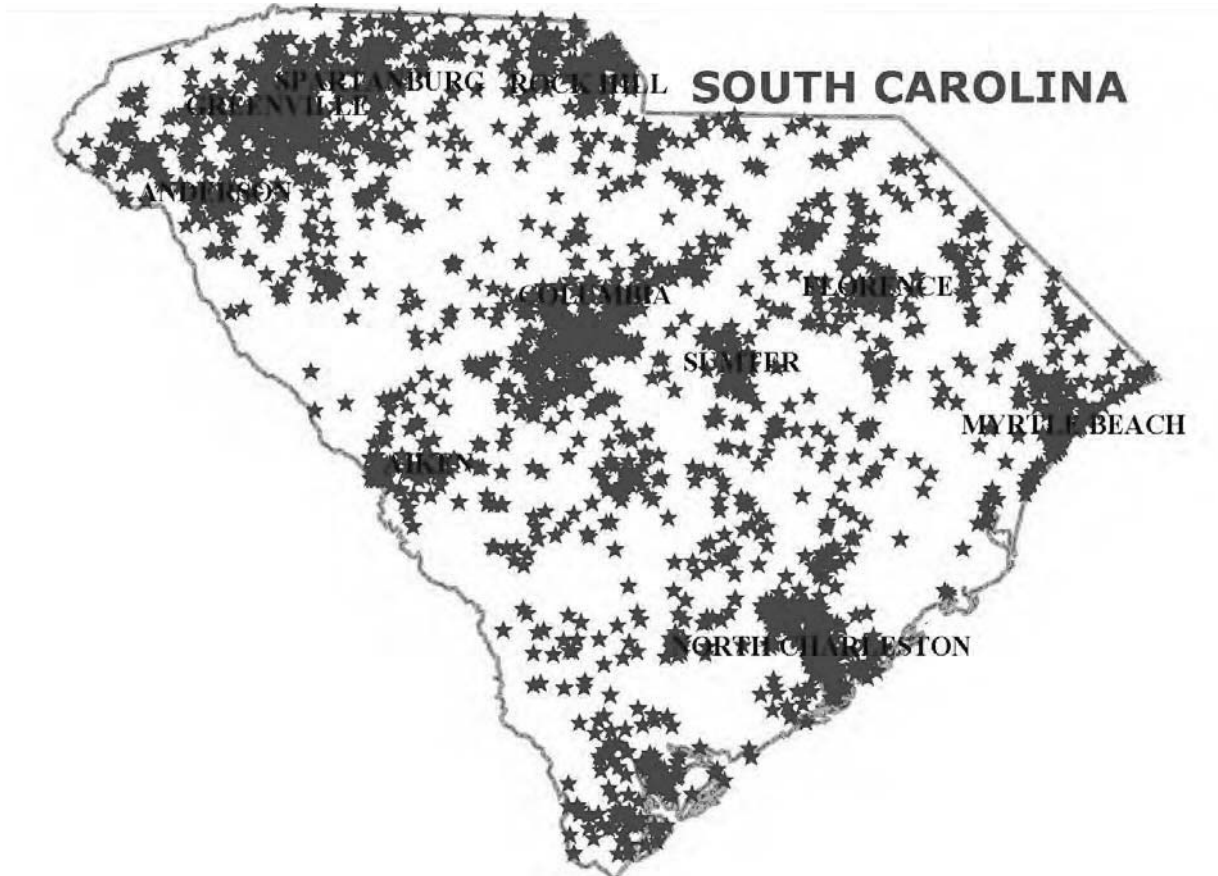
Gina Wheeler
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200 Maycaw Drive
Easley, SC 29642
Finance and Accounting

2. Evidence of Support

Include evidence of the interest level of support from parents, teachers, students, or any combination. (If the social situation of the proposed school's targeted population precludes establishing parental support, evidence should demonstrate support from community groups and agencies, including letters from these entities that specify the level of their commitment to the school.)

- **Expressions of Interest:** More than 3,000 South Carolinians, the vast majority of them parents but including scores of educators, have contacted Connections Academy – unsolicited, with no marketing outreach of any kind in the state – to express interest in having a South Carolina Connections Academy available for families in the state. Most of these South Carolinians have expressed their interest through the “Send Me Info” link on the Connections Academy website

(www.connectionsacademy.com) which requires them to provide name, address, and email address. As shown on the map below, these prospective South Carolina Connections Academy families live in every part of the state.



- **Face-to-face and virtual informational meetings:** To meet the increasing demand among South Carolina families for information about the proposed South Carolina Connections Academy, in September 2007 the Charter Committee held a series of face-to-face “ice cream socials” around the state, as well as virtual information sessions that families could attend from the comfort of home. Dozens of South Carolina families attended the following sessions:

- Ice Cream Socials (face-to-face informational meetings): 9/8 Rock Hill and Greenville; 9/15 Florence and Myrtle Beach; 9/28 Columbia; 9/29 Charleston.
- Virtual Chats (online info meetings): 9/4, 9/6, 9/11, 9/14, 9/25, 9/27.
- **Online Discussion Group:** South Carolinians most passionate about seeing South Carolina Connections Academy come to fruition helped to launch the South Carolina Connections Academy Yahoo discussion group in January 2007 (see http://groups.yahoo.com/group/South_Carolina_Connections_Academy). The group currently has 230 active members (with membership growing by approximately 50 per month) who have joined specifically to advocate for establishment of a South Carolina Connections Academy virtual public charter school, beginning with the passage of H3097. Group members include parents, educators, and community representatives, who may post questions and exchange information with each other as well as with the group moderator (see excerpt below).

South_Carolina_Connections_Academy · South Carolina Connections Academy

Search for other groups... Search

Home
Messages
Pending
Spam? (Empty)
Post
Files
Photos
Pending
Links
Database
Polls
Members
Pending
Calendar
Promote
Invite
Management

There's something new for moderators! Learn, share, and take your group to new heights with Moderator Central. Check it out.

Messages

Message # Go Search: Search Advanced

Messages 173 - 204 of 204 Oldest | < Older | Never > | Newest

Sort by Date

Delete

Messages: Show Message Summaries (Group by Topic)

#173 From: beverly mccraw <beverlymccraw@yahoo.com>
Date: Tue Sep 11, 2007 10:49 am
Subject: virtual school and ice cream

WOW!
All of this is really awesome! the school will be opened the fall of 2008. this is really cool i am really excited about it. the ice cream social is great as well to get the word out. i feel alot of other people would be intrested in this if they would check it out.

Boardwalk for \$500? In 2007? Ha!
Play Monopoly Here and Now (it's updated for today's economy) at Yahoo! Games.

Reply | Forward | Messages in this Topic (1)

#174 From: "Haynes, Rosellen J." <jhaynes@srhs.com>
Date: Tue Sep 11, 2007 10:11 am
Subject: RE: Is this school online yet?

Will this be on-line this evening. As I work during the day, I cannot access it from the Hospital. Thanks. Rose

Yahool! Groups Tips
Did you know...
Show off your group to the world. Share a photo of your group with us.

Best of Y! Groups
Check them

- ***Educator Interest:*** Unsolicited, with no recruitment outreach whatsoever, more than 25 teachers, school counselors and administrators have inquired about employment opportunities at South Carolina Connections Academy. Preliminary discussions have also begun with Columbia College regarding partnerships between South Carolina Connections Academy and the college's Education Department for teacher professional development (possibly focusing on the college's unique Master's in Divergent Learning), student teacher placement, and collaborative research activities.
- ***Petition:*** The South Carolina Connections Academy Charter Committee circulated a petition both online and in person to be signed by parents who are meaningfully interested in having their children attend South Carolina Connections Academy and by educators who are interested in working for the school. The petition, which was signed by hundreds of South Carolinians from all over the state, is included in Appendix D.
- ***Testimonials:*** At the information sessions, on the Yahoo group, through the petition process, and via email and phone to the Charter Committee, South Carolina families have articulated the need for South Carolina Connections Academy and their fervent wish to see the school established statewide as soon as possible. Selected testimonials appear in Appendix D; the following are typical of the comments received from parents around the state:

I have a child who suffers from depression and has missed a lot of school. However, she has no problem completing work at home on time. It would be a great benefit to me to be able to have virtual school so that when she is in one of these episodes she would not get behind in school. Just because she has some psychological problems should not impede her ability to learn since she has a higher than average IQ. -- Terry Clarkin

I believe that having this school in South Carolina would be a great thing for children in South Carolina. As a single parent of 5 boys it is not easy sending my children off to school when there is so much violence...Only last year my now 17yr old was attacked by 4 other students on the school grounds -- this is why I'm saying yes to a school like this in South Carolina. -- Jennifer Rambert

I just want to share how Virtual Learning will be so GREAT in my son's life. He has TBI (Traumatic Brain Injury). My son was on the Honor Roll in public school; after being injured in a car accident I had to home school him. Being apart of such a charter on this magnitude would really make a difference in his Education. I have my Masters in Physics/Electrical Engineering. Just being apart of this Charter will allow me to help others. -- Karen White

For additional testimonials, see Appendix D.

3. Conversion Schools

Not applicable to South Carolina Connections Academy.

D. Educational Program

Clearly describe the charter school's education program, goals, objectives, pupil achievement standards, and curriculum, which must meet or exceed any student academic standards adopted by the school district in which the school will be located. Demonstrate that the educational program is designed to enable each student to achieve these standards.

South Carolina Connections Academy combines proven and rigorous print-based curriculum materials with the best in technology-enhanced learning such that a significant portion of the curriculum is delivered through the Internet and other electronic means in a developmentally appropriate way that is also in compliance with H3097. For a complete description of the curriculum, see Appendix E (which includes a complete listing of courses and materials along with a DVD that provides curriculum demonstrations).

Elementary/Middle School Curriculum: The K-8 South Carolina Connections Academy curriculum integrates textbooks, lesson plans and other content from a variety of leading publishers including Houghton Mifflin®, Zaner-Bloser®, the Calvert School® and others. In addition to high-quality print materials, the South Carolina Connections Academy curriculum also features technology-based content from “best of breed” providers such as, BrainPop®, World Book®, SkillsTutor™, Compass®, and United Streaming®, as well as the nationally recognized Hooked on Phonics® and Hooked on Math® programs. The curriculum is updated regularly, with Governing Board approval, based on a rigorous analysis of student performance on state standards as measured by state testing results and internal assessments. The Connections Academy curriculum has been shown to be

effective based on standardized test scores – in 2006-07, Florida Connections Academy earned an A on the State Report Card, while Ohio Connections Academy was the first virtual charter school in that state ever to have made AYP.

Connections Academy is the first national virtual school program to be certified by the Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation.

The South Carolina Connections Academy curriculum integrates a variety of proprietary and highly effective technology tools such as Teachlets – online animated tutorials developed by Connections Academy to introduce challenging topics and provide interactive practice – and LiveLesson, which provides for real-time web conferencing with small groups of students using voice over IP, chat, electronic whiteboard, and shared web surfing. (See Definitions on pages 5-7 for more details.)

Foreign language instruction begins early at South Carolina Connections Academy, with Spanish and French available to students in grades K-8. Advanced middle school students also have the option to take French, German, Latin or Mandarin Chinese. Language courses integrate proven-effective online materials with a unique audio feature that allows teachers to hear and grade actual student speech. Courses may also include LiveLesson instruction for maximum student-to-teacher and student-to-student interaction.

The South Carolina Connections Academy curriculum also includes unique electives such as Home Life, which combines provides fun skill-building projects in which the whole family can participate. New Home Life modules are added regularly, such as “Civil Engineering – Build Chocolate Asphalt” (representing each of the

various branches of engineering in a fun way in order to expose students to this fascinating field); “Culinary Creatures,” in which families combine kitchen skills and basic entomology (the study of insects) to create cookie frogs, chocolate ants, and a tasty centipede worthy of a snack; and “My Own Secret Garden: Make a Terrarium,” in which students learn about ecology and life science as they make their own small ecosystem in a terrarium—a miniature garden in a jar.

The South Carolina Connections Academy K-8 technology literacy course, Educational Technology and Online Learning, provides not only a comprehensive set of technology skills ranging from basic productivity tools to Web page development, but also reinforces national and state academic standards, online study skills, and Internet safety.

An interactive South Carolina Connections Academy course called Frog and Toad Quest provides students an opportunity to monitor frog and toad populations across the state and around the nation. This online project joins Connections Academy students with scientists from the National Wildlife Federation and U.S. Geological Survey as they monitor amphibians and collect and analyze data on their activities.

South Carolina Connections Academy also provides online Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT) preparation for Grades 3-8 through a program called Study Island. This state-specific, online state assessment preparation and standards-based learning program has been shown to produce a typical test performance increase of over 10 percent. Each Study Island topic is built from one South Carolina Academic Standard and contains a lesson and assessment question.

Students can choose either traditional tests or interactive games in order to go through the material. Teachers then have access to real-time progress reports that analyze deficiencies and help target intervention.

For further details on the South Carolina Connections Academy curriculum, see Appendix D, which includes a complete listing of courses and materials as well as a DVD with online demonstrations.

High School Curriculum: South Carolina Connections Academy provides a comprehensive high school program with three levels of academic coursework: Basic, Standard, and Honors. While all three levels are designed to meet state standards and provide students a rigorous curriculum, the three levels will enable differentiation based on student needs and career goals. South Carolina Connections Academy students work with their school counselors to determine appropriate course level placement. When South Carolina Connections Academy launches, the Connections Academy high school curriculum will consist of approximately 165 courses, including a wide variety of electives and intensive foreign language instruction from Spanish through Mandarin Chinese.

The high school program involves more online experience than the K-8 program, as appropriate for secondary school learners. Compared with K-8, South Carolina Connections Academy's high school program includes substantial teacher-directed instruction through synchronous and asynchronous e-learning tools. The South Carolina Academic Standards-aligned high school curriculum integrates digital versions of textbooks from major publishers enhanced by multimedia, interactive material, communication/conferencing tools, and team projects. In keeping with best

practice in virtual learning at both the high school and university level, however, core academic courses also include the provision of print-based textbooks from leading national publishers. The use of print as well as online texts is regularly cited by parents and students as an important differentiator for the Connections Academy high school program. In addition, students will have offline assignments, projects, novels and practice work. For a complete overview of the high school curriculum, please see Appendix E.

South Carolina Connections Academy high school courses typically include extensive use of Teachlets, the highly interactive, asynchronous tutorials that incorporate graphics, video, and audio to show students the concepts and ideas they will need to complete the lessons. Along with the use of LiveLesson, Teachlets dramatically increase the effectiveness of the secondary school instructional model. In addition to Teachlets and LiveLessons (see Definitions on pages 5-7 for additional details), the South Carolina Connections Academy high school courses incorporate graded asynchronous online discussions which are required for all students. This tool creates important opportunities for collaboration and interaction among students.

This quality virtual high school program also includes a host of services and procedures to address credits, transcripts, and guidance counseling. It is important for students to start early on planning for graduation and post-secondary education or the world of work. Without early planning, students run the risk of missing crucial courses that might thwart their plans or aspirations. The following important aspects of the South Carolina Connections Academy high school program were developed

with input from a national group of principals, guidance counselors, superintendents, teachers and parents.

- o *Course Selection and Credit Transfer:* Connections Academy's curriculum is CITA-accredited which helps to ensure that credits will transfer to other high schools as well as to any college or university; the school will also begin seeking its own CITA and Southern Association of Schools and Colleges (SACS) accreditation within a year of launch. For students transferring into South Carolina Connections Academy, guidance counselors will carefully analyze student transcripts to provide the maximum allowable "transfer credit" into the Connections Academy program. Upon graduation or withdrawal, students will receive an official South Carolina Connections Academy transcript detailing both the credits earned at South Carolina Connections Academy as well as any transfer credits. Connections Academy uses a standard whereby one credit equals approximately 180 "hours" of instruction (this is equivalent to a full-year course in a traditional high school and is sometimes referred to as Carnegie Units).

South Carolina Connections Academy parents receive a detailed Course Selection Guide with specific school information during the enrollment process. Parents then have an opportunity to select the courses for their students based on their academic level, previously completed high school level courses, and plans for higher education and/or career. Parent selections are analyzed along with the student's prior academic record by the

Connections Academy Placement Team who will then either accept these selections or recommend some modifications.

- o *Instructional Delivery and Scheduling:* South Carolina Connections Academy students who enroll in the K-8 program and elect to continue into high school will notice that the high school introduces increased structure and a pacing system that encourages all the students in a single class to move forward at a similar speed.

The South Carolina Connections Academy high school program includes a significant amount of computer-facilitated learning, though not amounting to more than 75% of a student's core academic instruction in compliance with H3097. As noted previously, while hard copy textbooks are provided in some courses (generally along with an enhanced online version of the text as well), students may also take several courses that are completely online. Unlike the K-8 program which is largely asynchronous/user scheduled (which means parents set the schedule and lessons can be done in any sequence and pace), in high school the pacing for core courses follows an asynchronous/fixed schedule (which means that the schedule is fixed and students must all move at a similar pace). This does not take away the ability of South Carolina Connections Academy teachers to personalize the curriculum for students; however it does add accountability, structure, and significant peer interaction that is necessary for a quality high school program.

- o *Area and Subject Requirements:* Each South Carolina Connections Academy student must successfully complete a minimum of 24 Carnegie units (240 semester hours) to graduate. Units completed must meet or exceed the South Carolina graduation requirements as shown below.

Area	Subject	# Credits
Language Arts	English	4.0
Mathematics	Mathematics	4.0
Science	Science	3.0
Social Studies	U. S. History and Constitution	1.0
Social Studies	Government	0.5
Social Studies	Economics	0.5
Social Studies	Any in the Area of Social Studies	1.0
Health and PE	Physical Education	1.0
Technology	Computer Science (incl. keyboarding) <i>(Each student must demonstrate computer literacy before graduation)</i>	1.0
Humanities or Technology	Foreign Language OR Career and Technology Education	1.0
Various	Electives	7.0

- o *Promotion, Graduation and Grade Point Average (GPA):* Students in Grades 9 – 12 must be enrolled in a minimum of four and a half (4.5) credits each school year in order to be considered full-time. In order to move to the 10th grade students must have earned (or transferred) a minimum of 5 credits, to move to the 11th grade student must have earned (or transferred) a minimum of 10 credits and to move to the 12th grade students must have earned (or transferred) a minimum of 16 credits. Students will receive only receive credit for classes passed with a C- grade or better. To graduate and receive a diploma from South Carolina Connections Academy, a student must have

been enrolled for at least one whole semester prior to graduation, have completed required End of Course tests, and passed the High School Assessment Program (HSAP) test. Each student must successfully complete a minimum of 24 Carnegie units (240 semester hours) to graduate, as shown above.

Compliance with H3097: In 2007, the South Carolina General Assembly passed H3097 to amend the Charter Schools Law to allow virtual charter schools. H3097 includes several specific educational program requirements for virtual charter schools, which South Carolina Connections Academy meets in the following ways. (Note that other H3097 requirements focusing on student eligibility are addressed in Sections B and F.)

(1) The charter school must provide each student enrolled in the program with a course or courses of online or computer instruction approved by the State Department of Education that must meet or exceed the South Carolina content and grade specific standards. Students enrolled in the program of online or computer instruction must receive all instructional materials required for the student's program.

The South Carolina Connections Academy curriculum meets or exceeds South Carolina content and grade-specific standards for grades K-12. Sample documentation of alignment to these standards is included in Appendix F. Following approval of the charter but before the launch of the school, South Carolina Connections Academy will submit its 350+ courses for approval to the State Department of Education pursuant to the processes established for such approval.

South Carolina Connections Academy will provide all instructional materials required for each student's program, including physical materials delivered to the student's home and online materials provided via technology.

(2) the charter school will ensure that the persons who operate the program on a day-to-day basis comply with and carry out all applicable requirements, statutes, regulations, rules, and policies of the charter school;

Day-to-day operation of South Carolina Connections Academy will be carried out by the school's Highly Qualified, South Carolina certified staff, led by the school Principal. These persons will comply with all requirements, statutes, regulations, rules, and policies of the charter school, including policies adopted by the school's Governing Board. For more information about the South Carolina Connections Academy staff, see Section H.

(3) ensure that each course offered through the program is taught by a teacher meeting the requirements of Section 59-40-50;

All South Carolina Connections Academy teachers will be certified to teach in South Carolina and will be Highly Qualified to teach their grade/subject as defined by No Child Left Behind. See Section H for further details about the South Carolina Connections Academy teaching staff.

(4) ensure that a parent or legal guardian of each student verifies the number of hours of educational activities completed by the student each school year;











The South Carolina
Connections Academy
Learning Management

Code Key:	N - No School	U - Absence	1 - One Hour	2 - Two Hours
	3 - Three Hours	4 - Four Hours	5 - Five Hours	6 - Six Hours
	7 - Seven Hours	8 - Eight Hours	9 - Nine Hours	

	May 2007				
Day:	M	T	W	T	F
Date:	7	8	9	10	11
Mark Everyone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Frankie Demo	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Norma Demo	<input type="checkbox"/>	7	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stan Demo	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stella Demo	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

System (LMS) requires parents/legal guardians of students to complete a daily log of attendance hours, which are verified by the teacher based on student participation (defined as lesson completion, communication with teachers, etc.).

In addition, the LMS closely monitors student performance in each course, providing an overall score and course-by-course gradebook which are updated in

My Household						
Name	Role	Grade	Tools	Homeroom Teacher	Overall Score*	Attendance*
Norma	Student	11	   	Jen Teacher  	54%	 On Track
Stan	Student	9	   	Jen Teacher  	90%	 On Track

real time. Both attendance and performance metrics are displayed prominently in the LMS for parent, teacher, and administrator review, facilitating verification of the number of hours of educational activities completed by the student each year.

See Section F(3), Pupil Accounting, for further details.

(5) *adopt a plan by which it will provide:*

(a) *frequent, ongoing monitoring to ensure and verify that each student is participating in the program, including proctored assessment(s) per semester in core subjects graded or evaluated by the teacher, and at least bi-weekly parent-teacher conferences in person or by telephone;*

The South Carolina
Connections Academy LMS
closely tracks student
participation in the program,
including daily completion of
lessons, communication with



The screenshot shows a web interface with a navigation bar at the top containing icons for home, calendar, book, document, and help. The main heading is "Overdue Lessons and Lessons Awaiting Approval". Below this, it says "5 total lessons". A table follows with columns: "Set Status", "Course - Lesson", and "Unse Asse". The first row shows a dropdown menu with "Completed" selected, and the lesson title "Language Arts J (8) 2006-07 - Analyzing". The second row shows a dropdown menu with "Completed" selected, and the lesson title "Language Arts J (8) 2006-07 - Genre Focus: Historical Text". The third row shows a dropdown menu with "Completed" selected, and the lesson title "Language Arts J (8) 2006-07 - Illustrated Map: Revise and Edit". The fourth row shows a dropdown menu with "Completed" selected, and the lesson title "Science 8 - The Sun". The fifth row shows a dropdown menu with "Completed" selected, and the lesson title "Technology Literacy J - Organize Ideas for Writing". At the bottom, it says "5 total lessons" and has "Save" and "Cancel" buttons.

teachers, compliance with school requests, and so on.

All assessments, including frequent quizzes, end of unit tests, and portfolio assignments, are graded and evaluated by the student's teacher. Each semester, students will participate in at least one proctored assessment in core subjects.

South Carolina Connections Academy requires a minimum bi-weekly parent-teacher/teacher-student conference by telephone or in person. In the secondary model the student's six subject teachers and homeroom teacher may rotate this responsibility among them. This is in addition to frequent, often daily, teacher-parent and teacher-student communication via telephone, WebMail, LiveLesson, and in-person meetings. All communication between teachers and parents or students is documented in the Log section of the Learning Management System, which allows for detailed tracking of interactions as well as seamless support for students and their families from multiple individuals at the school.

Log Entries

Show Hidden Entries? ☐

Today 10:19 AM

Duration: 00:13:17

Area: Instructional

[Edit](#) [Hide](#) [Delete](#)

Category: Instructional: Teaching, Instructional: Participation, Instructional: Performance

Contact Type: Phone call - successful

Contactee: Charlotte Demo (and LC)

Confidential? No

Recorder: Teacher, Jen

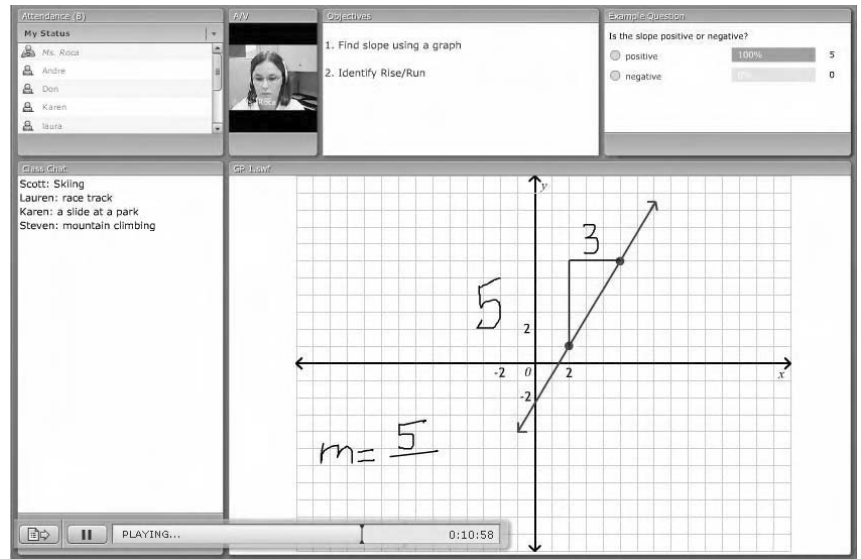
Cascading? No

Comments:

Phone call started at 10:21:48 and ended at 10:35:06. Weekly call with Charlotte. Discussed her courseload and how to manage her time a little more efficiently. May discuss a "block scheduling" approach with Learning Coach, focusing on fewer subjects more in depth each day. Talked with Charlotte about the importance of participating in the class discussion message boards and some strategies for getting the most out of them (eg cite specific facts but aim for bigger picture; pose questions; compare and contrast, etc.) Invited Charlotte to LiveLesson scheduled for next week for kids in English 9A to compare compositions and review basic editing techniques; Charlotte is excited to come and volunteered to share her most recent essay. C says she LOVES the online labs for Physical Science! I pointed out that her quizzes following the labs were much better than those before, so we agreed to find some additional online interactive visuals for next few lessons. Spoke briefly with LC, Aunt Betty, and reminded her to call me anytime with questions. Set a date to talk again next week, 9/15, but told C to watch out for webmail from me in the meantime!

(b) *regular instructional opportunities in real time that are directly related to the school's curricular objectives, including, but not limited to, meetings with teachers and educational field trips and outings;*

Real-time
instructional
opportunities at
South Carolina
Connections
Academy include
frequent
LiveLessons (see



sample screen at right), in which the teacher and one or more students interact in real time via web conferencing that includes two-way audio, video, and text chat; telephone conversations focusing on curricular issues; educational field trips and outings that are scheduled at least monthly; and meetings with teachers via technology or in person.

(c) *verification of ongoing student attendance in the program;*

As noted above, the South Carolina Connections Academy Learning Management System (LMS) requires parents/legal guardians of students to complete a daily log of attendance hours, which are verified by the teacher based on student participation (defined as lesson completion, communication with teachers, etc.). See screen shot of attendance tool, above in item 4 of this H3097 discussion.

(d) verification of ongoing student progress and performance in each course as documented by ongoing assessments and examples of student coursework;

The South Carolina Connections Academy LMS closely monitors student progress and performance in each course, with scores updated in real time in the student's gradebook and on the student, parent and teacher

homepages. Student

progress and performance

are measured via ongoing

assessments, both online

(such as sample at right)

and offline, and by portfolio

samples of student

coursework submitted to the

teacher either in hard-copy

(for the elementary grades)

or online drop-box (for the

secondary grades).

http://schools.connectionsacademy.com - Shiloh Part I Quiz 1 - Microsoft Internet Exp...

- How does Marty know that the dog has been "kicked around" if there are no physical marks present on the dog? (1 point)
 - ☐ The dog cringes and behaves cautiously, like he is afraid.
 - ☐ The dog will not come to Marty when he calls for him.
 - ☐ When Marty whistles, the dog charges at him.
 - ☐ The dog barks and growls when Marty disciplines him.
- Why won't Marty's parents let him keep Shiloh? (1 point)
 - ☐ They do not like dogs.
 - ☐ They are afraid that they will have to take care of it.
 - ☐ They don't want to keep Shiloh because he has ticks.
 - ☐ They do not want any trouble from Judd Travers.
- For items 4-5, use the following sentence:
On my last summer vacation, I _____.
A real ending would be which of the following?
(1 point)
 - ☐ flew a rocket ship to Mars
 - ☐ went to Florida with my family
 - ☐ traveled back in time
 - ☐ grew to be eight feet tall
- A fanciful ending would be which of the following? (1 point)
 - ☐ read a book for school
 - ☐ went swimming with my friends
 - ☐ fought a fire-breathing dragon
 - ☐ went to summer camp
- Judd Travers says, "Never name any of my dogs. Dogs one, two, three, and four is all." Why do you suppose he does not name them? What does this suggest about his character? Support your answer with details and information from Chapters 1-3. (2 points)

(6) administer to all students in a proctored setting all applicable assessments as required by the South Carolina Education Accountability Act.

South Carolina Connections Academy will administer all assessments required

by the South Carolina Education Accountability Act at in-person, proctored

locations, staffed by personnel trained in test security, within reasonable driving

distance of students' homes. See Section E for details.

(B) Nothing in this section shall prohibit a charter school that provides a program of online or computer instruction from reimbursing families of enrolled students for costs associated with their Internet connection for use in the program.

Along with access to necessary computer hardware and software, South Carolina Connections Academy intends to provide, on a reimbursement basis, an Internet connection subsidy to help defray families' cost of Internet connection for use in the program. First priority for these reimbursements will go to families whose students qualify for Free or Reduced Lunch.

(C) A charter school shall provide no more than seventy-five percent of a student's core academic instruction in kindergarten through twelfth grade via an online or computer instruction program. The twenty-five percent of the student's core academic instruction may be met through the regular instructional opportunities outlined in subitem (A)(5)(b).

As described throughout

Section D, South Carolina

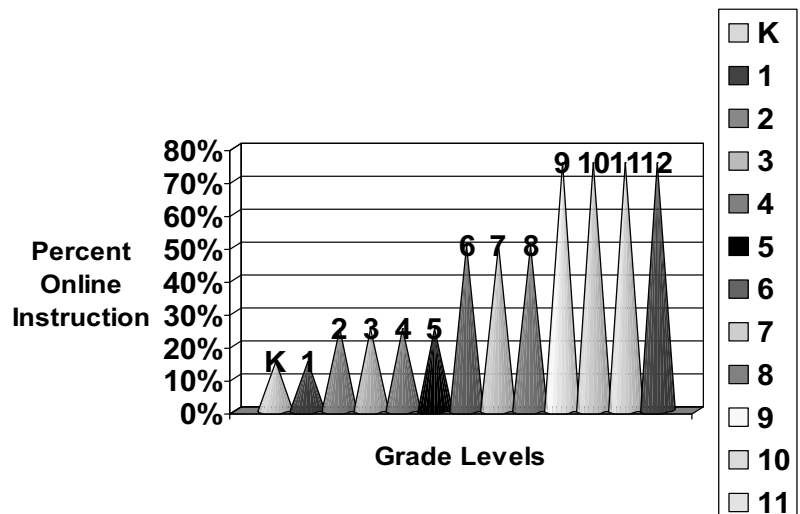
Connections Academy

provides numerous regular

opportunities for real-time

interaction among students

and their teachers. Such



interactions will be both in-person physically or virtually in-person (such as

LiveLesson, example shown above), with multiple students participating in real time

or with student and teacher one-on-one in real time. Such activities will account for

at least 25% of the student's core academic instruction. In addition, as detailed

above, the South Carolina Connections Academy curriculum integrates very

extensive off-line, non-computer materials for core academic instruction.

1. Student Population

- a. If the school will distinguish students by grade level, identify the targeted student population by grade level and any unique educational needs of the students. Complete Student Enrollment Projections table (see Appendix A).

South Carolina Connections Academy will serve grades K-12. The projected student enrollment by grade and by year is shown in the table below as well as in Appendix A. These enrollment estimates are based on the experience of similar Connections Academy-affiliated schools across the country.

Year	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
2008-09	75	71	85	77	80	85	88	102	114	91	51	40	40	1,000
2009-10	113	107	128	116	121	127	133	153	170	136	77	60	60	1,500
2010-11	150	142	171	154	161	169	177	205	227	182	102	80	80	2,000
2011-12	188	178	213	193	201	212	221	256	284	227	128	100	100	2,500
2012-13	225	213	256	231	241	254	265	307	341	273	153	120	120	3,000

As a virtual charter school focused on individualized instruction, South Carolina Connections Academy has an actual class size of one for each student. However, the average student-to-teacher ratio at South Carolina Connections Academy is expected to be 50:1 for grades K-5, when the student's Learning Coach is most directly involved with implementation of instruction, and 35:1 for grades 6-12, when Learning Coaches serve more of a monitoring role while students are work directly with their teachers.

- b. **Conversion Schools:** In the case of a conversion school, indicate the school's grades prior to conversion.

Not applicable.

2. Goals and Objectives

Clearly state the school's goals and objectives. Provide enough detail to indicate specific outcomes. Describe strategies to accomplish the educational goals and objectives.

The following measurable, student-centered goals capture the ambitious yet achievable aspirations of South Carolina Connections Academy. The school's performance on each of these goals will be measured by data produced and tracked through the Learning Management System; communicated continuously to students, parents, and teachers; reported monthly to the Governing Board; and accounted for through an annual report to the SCPCSD and the citizens and taxpayers of South Carolina.

- **Goal 1—Student Performance:** South Carolina Connections Academy students will demonstrate mastery of key concepts and academic standards across core academic subjects.
 - **Measurable Objective 1:** South Carolina Connections Academy students will average at least a 75% performance rate (GPA, calibrated to the South Carolina grading scale) over the course of the school year. **Data Source and Reporting:** Student performance is measured on internal assessments, including quizzes, tests and portfolios, graded by the teacher and reported in real time through the LMS. The average performance rate across all students is reported each month to the Board and will form the basis for tracking this goal.
- **Goal 2—Yearly Academic Growth:** South Carolina Connections Academy students will demonstrate a year of academic growth for a year in school.

- **Measurable Objective 1:** At least 75% of South Carolina Connections Academy students will demonstrate at least a year's worth of academic growth from the beginning of the school year to the end. **Data Source and Reporting:** The school will administer its Longitudinal Evaluation of Academic Progress (LEAP) assessment at the beginning and end of each year (see details in Section E); the individual results of this pre- and post-testing are reported immediately to students and Learning Coaches, with aggregate data reported to the Governing Board after each testing cycle.
- **Goal 3—Student Achievement Scores:** South Carolina Connections Academy students will first meet and then exceed performance by comparable students on the PACT, HSAP, and other tests required by the South Carolina Education Accountability Act. Note that South Carolina Connections Academy will administer these assessments to its students at in-person, proctored locations throughout the state as required by H3097.
 - **Measurable Objective 1:** Beginning with Year 1 of the charter, South Carolina Connections Academy will meet AYP. **Data Source and Reporting:** PACT and HSAP results together with other criteria (such as attendance and test participation) as defined and reported by the State Department of Education.
 - **Measurable Objective 2:** By Year 5 of the charter, the school will meet or exceed statewide averages on the required South Carolina standardized assessments. **Data Source and Reporting:** PACT,

HSAP, and other required test results as reported through the State Department of Education..

- **Goal 4–High-Quality Teaching:** South Carolina Connections Academy will provide its students with high-quality teaching focused on the needs of each learner.
 - **Measurable Objective 1:** 100% of the teachers will be Highly Qualified as defined under No Child Left Behind. **Data Source and Reporting:** School personnel records, reported monthly to Governing Board (as well as annually through SCPCSD).
 - **Measurable Objective 2:** At least 90% of parents each year will express satisfaction with their children’s teachers. **Data Source and Reporting:** Annual Parent Satisfaction survey conducted by an independent market research firm; results reported to Governing Board and all stakeholders annually.
- **Goal 5–School Community:** South Carolina Connections Academy will create a measurable sense of community within the virtual school environment.
 - **Measurable Objective 1:** By the end of Year 1, the school will have at least three (3) Community Coordinators in place to facilitate face-to-face activities in various regions of the state (see Definitions, pages 5-7). **Data Source and Reporting:** Data collected by school administration and reported monthly to Governing Board.

- **Measurable Objective 2:** Families will have the opportunity to participate in at least one (1) field trip per month during each school year, as part of the school's compliance with H3097. **Data Source and Reporting:** Data collected by school administration and reported monthly to Governing Board.
- **Measurable Objective 3:** On annual Parent Satisfaction survey, respondents will rate school events at least a 3.0 on a 4 point scale. **Data Source and Reporting:** Annual Parent Satisfaction survey conducted by an independent market research firm; results reported to Governing Board and all stakeholders annually.
- **Goal 6–Family Satisfaction:** South Carolina Connections Academy families will rate their school highly and be satisfied with their children's school experience.
 - **Measurable Objective 1:** South Carolina Connections Academy will measure at least 3.0 in overall program satisfaction on a 4 point scale. **Data Source and Reporting:** Annual Parent Satisfaction survey conducted by an independent market research firm; results reported to Governing Board and all stakeholders annually.

3. Academic Standards

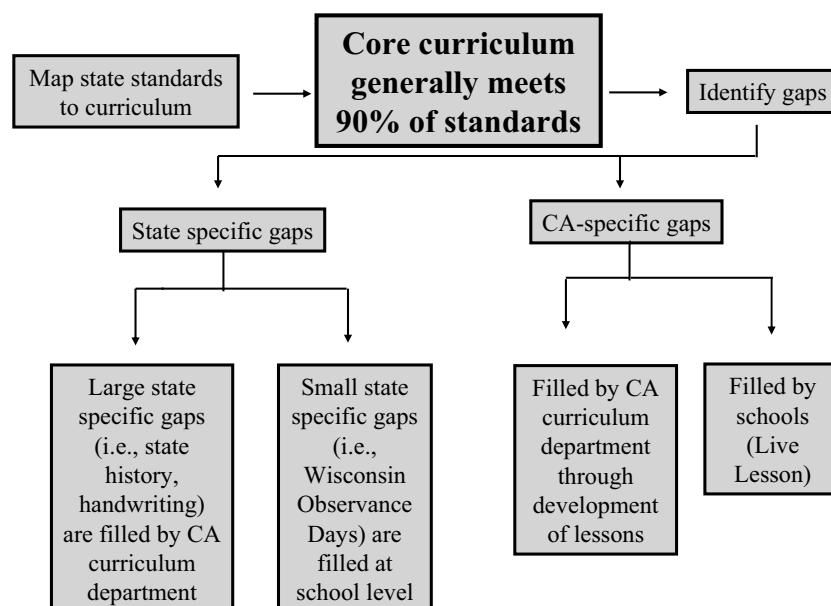
- a. **Identify what goals students will achieve in each subject area at each grade level.**

As the South Carolina Connections Academy curriculum aligns to South Carolina Academic Standards (see sample documentation of alignment in

Appendix F), students will be required to meet these standards through completion of each course. Students who fail to successfully complete their core academic courses (with a D- or better) will repeat those courses, to the extent of repeating an entire grade if necessary. As noted above, it is South Carolina Connections Academy's goal to average at least a 75% performance rate (GPA, calibrated to the South Carolina grading scale) for all of its students over the course of the school year.

b. Provide evidence of a correlation or identify a process to ensure that the school's instructional program meets or exceeds the student academic standards adopted by the State Board of Education.

The South Carolina Connections Academy curriculum aligns with South Carolina Academic Standards. For sample documentation of this alignment, see Appendix F. Completion of alignment will be accomplished before the launch of school, following the process shown below.



- c. **Specify the school’s provisions for determining whether all students are achieving or attaining the standards. Include the methods by which student performance information will be gathered and monitored.**

In keeping with H3097,

Grade Book Details

South Carolina Connections Academy will monitor every student’s performance in relation to the standards on continuous basis. The Learning Management System records and reports

Course Summary: *Click a course name to view details.*

10 total items

Course	Score	Grade	Lesson Completion
CP American History A	--		<div></div>
CP English 9 A	100%	A+	<div></div>
CP Physical Science A	78%	C+	<div></div>
CP Algebra 1 A	--		<div></div>
CP Algebra 1 B	80%	B-	<div></div>
CP English 9 B	90%	A-	<div></div>
CP American History B	70%	C-	<div></div>
CP Physical Science B	86%	B	<div></div>
Emergent Computer Technology	80%	B-	<div></div>
Physical Education	90%	A-	<div></div>
Overall	84%		<div></div>

10 total items

performance data for every lesson and activity, updating this information in the student’s real-time, online gradebook (see sample above) as well as on the student, parent, and teacher homepages for immediate intervention.

4. Instructional Program








The South Carolina Connections Academy instructional program meets the requirements of H3097, the virtual schools bill. In addition to specific references to H3097 in sections below, please see the detailed description of South Carolina Connections Academy’s compliance with H3097 on pages 37-43.

- a. **Provide a school calendar and daily schedule for the academic year. The calendar and schedule must reflect the number of instructional days per year and amount of instructional time per day.**

The proposed school calendar for South Carolina Connections Academy, shown in Appendix G, provides for a minimum of 180 days of instruction beginning in August and concluding in June each year. The school calendar

includes several additional training days for teachers before school starts as well as several wrap-up work days at the end of the school year.

In terms of daily schedule/hours of operation, teachers will work a standard school day, approximately 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. However, the flexible and individualized virtual school program allows students to “attend school” any time during a given 24-hour period. There is no such thing as a “typical” school day. However, the schedule below helps illustrate how one South Carolina Connections Academy student’s routine might look over a given week. (Note that real-time activities in compliance with H3097 may take a variety of forms.)

     							 CONNECTIONS ACADEMY® Coach Demo • Feedback • Log Out
Emmy Demo's Planner							
<< September October, 2007 November >>							
Sunday	Monday 1	Tuesday 2	Wednesday 3	Thursday 4	Friday 5	Saturday 6	
	Live Lesson with Ms. Smith - Sentence Structure	Geography Group Online Meeting	Phone Conference about Science Project (after quiz)	Geography F - Making a Compass	Field Trip to State Capitol! (ALL DAY EVENT)		
	Geography F - Using a Map	Geography F - Measuring Distances on Maps	Art F - Action Figures	Reading F - Carry Some Things Ashore			
	Reading F - A New Venture	Reading F - A Strange Lodging Place	Physical Education F - Aerobic Training	Reading F - Strange Visitor			
	Science F - States of Matter	Science F - Measuring Matter	Reading F - Rainbows and Reality	Science F - Elements, Compounds, and Mixtures			
	Writing F - From Phrase to Complete Sentence	Study Island - Week 9	Science F - Density	Writing F - Run-on Sentences			
			Writing F - Writing a Topic Sentence	Book Group at Library			

b. Describe the strategies or approaches that will be used to enable students to accomplish the curriculum standards.

The primary building blocks of the South Carolina Connections Academy instructional approach are parent involvement; individualized instruction; and high-quality teaching. Education research has shown that these touchstones of Personalized Performance Learning directly correlate to student achievement.

For example, decades of research show that parent participation is very closely related to student achievement. In *A New Generation of Evidence: The Family Is Critical to Student Achievement*³, Anne T. Henderson and Nancy Berla document concrete benefits of parent involvement for students, including higher grades and test scores, higher graduation rates, and greater enrollment in postsecondary education. A Stanford study found that using parents as tutors brought significant and immediate changes in children's I.Q. scores. At South Carolina Connections Academy, parents are closely involved in their child's education.

Students benefit from instruction that is differentiated in terms of pace, content, sequence and style. Among many studies on this topic, Margaret Haertel and her colleagues show in "What Helps Students Learn?"⁴ that "curriculum and assessment tailored to student ability and academic background" to assure "an appropriate level of task difficulty for students and an appropriate instructional pace" is a proven achievement tool. At South

³ Henderson, A., & Berla, N. (Eds.). *A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement*. National Committee for Citizens in Education, Center for Law and Education, Washington, DC, 1994.

⁴ Wang, Margaret C., Haertel, Geneva D., and Walberg, Herbert J., "What Helps Students Learn?" *Educational Leadership*, 1993.

Carolina Connections Academy, instruction is individualized for every student, every day.

Teacher quality counts as much in virtual learning environments as in traditional classrooms. While past research on the impact of good teaching, such as the 2000 study by Harold Wenglinsky⁵ of the Educational Testing Service, occurred before virtual schools were available as study sites, more recent research focusing specifically on virtual learning echoes the critical importance of teacher quality. For example, 2005's *A Synthesis of New Research on K-12 Online Learning*⁶ shows that the unique ability of an online teacher to communicate one-on-one with students and offer personalized feedback – as teachers at South Carolina Connections Academy will – is key to student success in virtual learning environments.

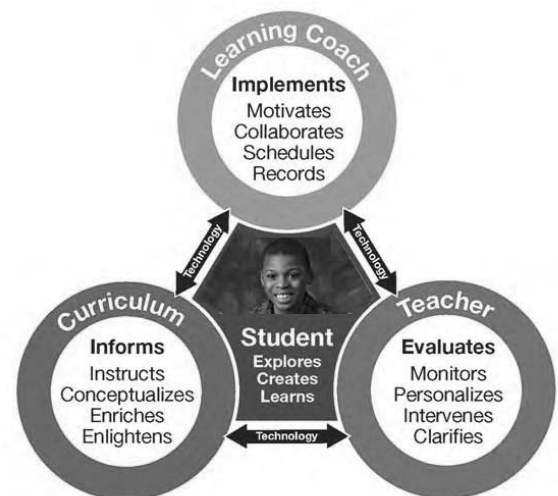
Unique Instructional Model: South Carolina Connections Academy's

instructional model is known as

Personalized Performance Learning. ,

Key aspects of the instructional model are as follows.

- **The Learning Triad:** Instruction at South Carolina Connections Academy surrounds each student with the resources needed for success. Each student is part of a “learning triad” as illustrated above.



⁵ Wenglinsky, Harold, How Teaching Matters: Bringing the Classroom Back Into Discussions of Teacher Quality, Educational Testing Service, 2000.

⁶ Smith, Rosina, Clark, Tom, and Blomeyer, Robert, A Synthesis of New Research in K-12 Online Learning. Learning Point Associates/North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, Naperville, IL, 2005

- **The Personalized Learning Plan:** The centerpiece of instruction at South Carolina Connections Academy is the Personalized Learning Plan (PLP), which provides for individualized instruction tailored to the learning needs of each child. The PLP is an extensive document developed at the beginning of the school year by the South Carolina-certified teacher in consultation with the student and the student's parents/guardians. This PLP is built from a combination of baseline assessments of both academic skills/knowledge and learning modalities, information gathered from the parents, and input directly from the student. Learning needs that go beyond the purely academic (such as study habits and interpersonal skills) are addressed in the PLP as well. The PLP then guides the student's course through the state standards-aligned curriculum. All daily lesson plans are provided to students and families online as well as in print, directing them step-by-step through use of the comprehensive set of textbooks, trade books, manipulatives, and consumables that South Carolina Connections Academy ships to them (fulfilling the requirements of H3097).
- **A complete learning team:** At South Carolina Connections Academy, student learning benefits from committed educators and involved parents who provide total support for the student's PLP.

- *South Carolina-licensed, highly qualified teachers:* Each South Carolina Connections Academy student has a South Carolina-certified teacher specially trained in the Connections Academy curriculum and instructional method. Teachers work closely with each student on a one-on-one basis using innovative technology tools. The teacher is responsible for evaluating assignments and work products, providing instructional assistance, assigning and scoring assessment activities, and providing feedback on the child's performance. Based on a student's demonstrated mastery of the material, teachers add, expand or replace assignments; they also grade students in each subject for the regular report cards and make promotion or retention decisions. Depending on the need of the learner, teacher contact –via telephone, LiveLesson, and WebMail – with the student and Learning Coach may be as frequent as several times a day, and at minimum once every two weeks via telephone or in person as required by H3097. Teachers do not wait to be contacted; they are proactive participants in their students' learning plans. In addition, South Carolina Connections Academy families are always welcome to visit the school office/teaching center in Columbia during business hours to meet with their teachers in person.
- *Face-to-face Learning Coaches:* Each South Carolina Connections Academy student has a Learning Coach—a parent or other

responsible adult designated by the parents—who works with him or her in person under the guidance of the South Carolina-certified professional teacher. Parent involvement is a centerpiece of the South Carolina Connections Academy concept. Whether a parent's role is as a Learning Coach, or as someone providing oversight to the Learning Coach, all parents/guardians are intimately familiar with their child's progress on a day-to-day basis. The school provides ongoing training and support to help Learning Coaches carry out their important role while making optimum use of the available technology tools and professional teacher support to do so. In grades K-8, the Learning Coaches are directly involved with students' day-to-day learning. In high school, they play an important oversight role, but students work with their teachers more independently, taking on increasing responsibility for their learning.

- *Expanded educational support:* The South Carolina Connections Academy Principal coordinates the work of the teachers, using data from the Learning Management System to target curriculum and instructional resources toward specific student needs. Supporting the Principal and teachers in their work are the staff guidance counselor and Special Education Coordinator, along with Connections Academy curriculum specialists who are highly trained in distance education methodologies and specific subject areas. Curriculum specialists are available by telephone and email to the

South Carolina Connections Academy staff for assistance in addressing particular curriculum topics or in customizing curriculum for particular student needs. Connections Academy experts in special education, gifted education, and English language learning are also on hand to assist the South Carolina Connections Academy staff.

In effect, each South Carolina Connections Academy student has a team of experts working together to leverage the school's myriad resources – technological, instructional, and interpersonal – for his or her success.

- **Socialization and Community:** South Carolina Connections Academy students have the opportunity to participate regularly in both face-to-face and virtual community activities. This requirement of H3097 is an integral component of the South Carolina Connections Academy model.

Face-to-face activities include regular field trips and community outings facilitated by the South Carolina Connections Academy Community Coordinators – parent volunteers whom South Carolina Connections Academy supports in organizing such activities for families who live nearby. Field trips anticipated for South Carolina families include visits to the State Capitol and Edventure Children's Museum in Columbia; the Agricultural Museum in Blackwell; the Coastal Discovery Museum on Hilton Head; Andrew Jackson State Park in Lancaster; the Roper Mountain Science Center in Greenville; and the South Carolina Aquarium in Charleston.

Technology-based activities range from a school newspaper to chess

club to teacher-led threaded discussions (see details below). Since all of the collaborative online activities and communications tools are restricted for use only by members of the South Carolina Connections Academy community, parents can feel comfortable that their children are experiencing this technology safely within the “walled garden” of South Carolina Connections Academy. Specific technology-facilitated activities include:

- *Book Club:* Guided by a teacher through online prompts and discussions, students read and converse about selected books. A collaborative online environment is dedicated to this club to encourage group literary discussion.
- *Arts and Crafts Club:* A simple instructional format encourages students to create crafts using materials found at home or in nature. Crafts include apple printing, magnetic poetry, and making gifts and educational games.
- *Pen Pals:* Skills in letter writing, penmanship, and written expression evolve when students are matched by grade level and personal interests—all while making friends with other Connections Academy students.
- *Science in the Kitchen:* Students apply their research skills and scientific knowledge in conducting experiments and discovering results. Students view and discuss experiments online in a collaborative format.

- *Debate Club:* Students will learn the art of public speaking and critical thinking in this challenging new debate club facilitated by Connections Academy Language Arts experts in a virtual environment. Students will discuss and debate current events and utilize skills such as brainstorming, topic research, presentation strategies, verbal and non-verbal cues, and role-playing. Facilitators will help students develop position statements, support arguments, think analytically, and become comfortable with public speaking.
- *Quiz Bowl:* Trivia whiz kids can test their knowledge of fun facts in the Connections Academy quiz bowl game. Trivia questions will be presented for elementary and middle school students, while academic questions will challenge high school students in the form of a weekly academic competition. Winners will be identified by state. High school champions will move on to a virtual end-of-year national academic quiz bowl competition.
- *Student Advisory Council:* Students selected in each state work together to provide guidance and feedback on student-related activities, such as creating a student mentoring program and identifying community service projects. The council fosters an environment for leadership skills and school community
- *Chess Club:* Students will learn about the ancient world of chess, including the origins of the game, descriptions of the chess board, opening positions, piece identification, rules of play, terminology, and

winning strategies. Students can sign up to practice and play chess on a private message board using notation language. Students may also have an opportunity to compete at local organized community events.

- *Connections Academy Literary Magazine:* The Connections Academy Literary Magazine recognizes and publishes original student artwork, poetry, short stories, and essays based on monthly thematic events.
- *Student Newspaper:* A student-managed newspaper team, including reporters and staff publish a monthly newspaper, *CA Times*. Students will learn group dynamics, organization strategies and team-building exercises as they research and write stories on current events, sports, entertainment, fashion, and an advice column. This team will also write the students' weekly homepage announcements and be advisors for the online photo yearbook.
- *The Poetry Corner:* To encourage artistic expression, the Poetry Lady will teach students the fine art of writing poetry. Students post their original poems on the Poetry message board and select poetry may be published in the Connections Academy Literary Magazine. Students are encouraged to keep a poetry journal.

c. If the school plans to offer the South Carolina State High School Diploma, describe the method for meeting the state requirements for the high school diploma. Include course unit requirements, seat time for Carnegie Units, and passage of the required examinations.

To graduate and receive a state high school diploma from South Carolina Connections Academy, a student must have been enrolled the school for at

least one whole semester prior to graduation. Each student must successfully complete a minimum of 24 Carnegie units/240 semester hours, including minimum subject area requirements required by the state. Grades of “C-” or higher are needed to count for overall credit as “passing” toward specific subject area requirements. The 24 units completed must meet South Carolina requirements by area and subject, as follows:

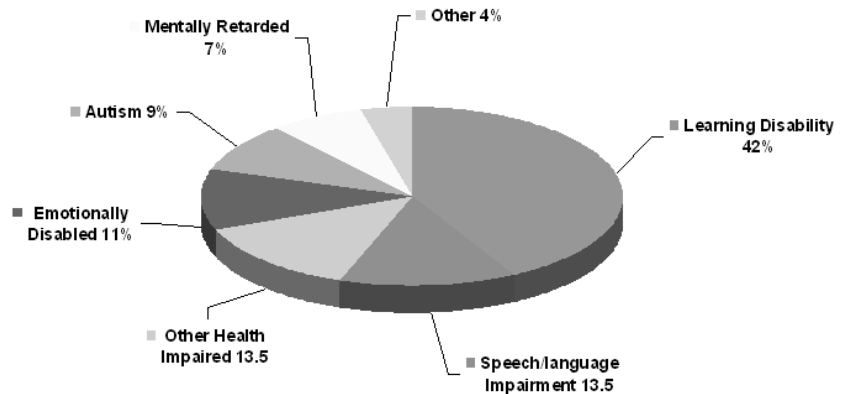
Area	Subject	# Credits
Language Arts	English	4.0
Mathematics	Mathematics	4.0
Science	Science	3.0
Social Studies	U. S. History and Constitution	1.0
Social Studies	Government	0.5
Social Studies	Economics	0.5
Social Studies	Any in the Area of Social Studies	1.0
Health and PE	Physical Education	1.0
Technology	Computer Science (incl. keyboarding) <i>(Each student must demonstrate computer literacy before graduation)</i>	1.0
Humanities or Technology	Foreign Language OR Career and Technology Education	1.0
Various	Electives	7.0

In addition, the student must pass required End of Course Tests and the HSAP in order to graduate from South Carolina Connections Academy.

For a complete discussion of the high school curriculum and program, please see pages 32-37 as well as Appendix E, which lists all courses and materials and also includes a DVD for a visual demonstration of the curriculum.

d. Explain how the school will comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Include the following information:

Working closely with the SCPCSD and its staff, South Carolina Connections Academy will build upon the excellent record of Connections Academy schools nationally in serving children with disabilities whether such children are currently or newly identified as disabled. Of the nearly 9,000 students served by Connections Academy virtual public schools in 10 states in 2006-07 (and an estimated 12,000 in 13 states for 2007-08), 12-15% are special education students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or 504 Plans, a concentration of special needs learners that mirrors the traditional public school system. Furthermore, the distribution of specific disabilities among these students is very similar to that in brick-and-mortar public school settings (see chart below).⁷ Connections Academy schools that have undergone special education compliance reviews and audits by their states have been found to be fully compliant. Furthermore, the Connections Academy model for providing special needs services



⁷ Data from October 2006 – total of 677 enrolled students with IEPs. “Other” includes students with vision impairments, hearing impairments, traumatic brain injury, orthopedic impairments, developmental delay and multiple disabilities.

receives very high marks from the parents of special education students; in 2006, 83% of these parents responded in an independent survey that they are satisfied with the services their children are receiving.

As a public school South Carolina Connections Academy shall, through its policies and procedures, comply with all applicable requirements of IDEA, 20 U.S.C. 1400 et. Seq. (IDEA), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. 794 (Section 504), as well as applicable South Carolina statutes and regulations. South Carolina Connections Academy will provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to children with disabilities, including, but not limited to, identifying and evaluating students; planning educational programs; conducting IEP team meetings; arranging for the provision of any necessary related services through charter school staff and contractual arrangement with private providers and/or, where feasible, traditional public school districts; and implementing placements in accordance with federal and state law.

- i. *describe the school's procedure for identifying students with special needs, developing individualized education programs, and providing related and transition services;*

For students enrolling in the charter school who do NOT already have an IEP or a prior diagnosis for special education, South Carolina Connections Academy will follow this process (after consulting with SCPCSD):

- **Identification:** To ensure service for students entering South Carolina Connections Academy without prior diagnosis for special education, the South Carolina Connections Academy Principal and

Special Education Coordinator will regularly review teacher observations, assessment results and other data to identify any possible special education needs among South Carolina Connections Academy students. The South Carolina Connections Academy Special Education Coordinator will serve as the Child Find coordinator to conduct Child Find coordination and location activities. These activities will include coordination with appropriate state and local organizations and agencies, as well as ensuring public awareness throughout South Carolina through outreach each fall about South Carolina Connections Academy special education services and procedures.

- ***Pre-referral/Referral/Evaluation:*** The South Carolina Connections Academy staff will form a Child Study team consisting of teachers, Special Education Coordinator, Principal, and Connections Academy specialists to handle all pre-referrals, which may be made by teachers, parents, or others. Child Study team procedures will be reviewed with SCPCSD. The Child Study team will determine if the student's needs can be met through curriculum modifications and interventions or if a formal referral for special education evaluation is warranted. If the former, the teacher then implements and documents suggested modifications, lesson adaptations, and alternative instructional strategies, as well as the student's level of success with each. If the Child Study team suspects that a student

requires special educational services, the following procedures are implemented:

- The South Carolina Connections Academy teacher consults with the Principal and Special Education Coordinator to complete an official special education referral. The parent is notified of this referral.
- Parental consent for the student evaluation is obtained and the appropriate evaluations are arranged. Parents are sent a copy of *Procedural Safeguards*.
- Parent is invited to the interdisciplinary Child Study team meeting to review the assessment results.
- ***IEP Development:*** If as a result of evaluation, the Child Study team determines that the student has a disability, an IEP meeting is scheduled – at the South Carolina Connections Academy office, at another mutually agreeable site, or by telephone – and the parents are invited to attend. IEP goals are formulated with parental consent. The IEP is then implemented as described below.

For students enrolling in the charter school who DO already have an IEP, South Carolina Connections Academy will follow this process:

- ***IEP Review:*** All families applying to South Carolina Connections Academy are asked to disclose if their child has an IEP in place.⁸ During

⁸ South Carolina Connections Academy will not deny admission to students on the basis of disability. South Carolina Connections Academy will provide students with disabilities the opportunity to meet any appropriate minimum eligibility criteria for admission – that is, age and South Carolina residence – consistent with state and federal law and civil rights requirements.

the enrollment process South Carolina Connections Academy will review the existing IEP and take one of these actions:

- o If the IEP already reflects a virtual environment, the student continues through the enrollment process with the existing, compliant IEP.
- o If South Carolina Connections Academy special education staff feels the student's needs can be appropriately met in the least restrictive environment in a virtual setting, but the IEP does not reflect such a placement, the student continues with the enrollment process, and within the first 45 days of school an IEP conference is held by South Carolina Connections Academy team to revise the IEP and document the student's official change of placement. During the interim South Carolina Connections Academy implements the student's IEP to the extent possible.
- o If a student with a disability who had an IEP that was in effect in a previous South Carolina public school transfers to South Carolina Connections Academy, South Carolina Connections Academy (in consultation with the parents) will provide FAPE to the child (including services comparable to those described in the child's IEP from the previous public agency-to the extent possible), until the South Carolina Connections Academy either (1) Adopts the child's IEP from the previous public agency; or (2) Develops, adopts, and

implements a new IEP that meets the applicable state requirements.

- o If a student with a disability who is receiving special education services pursuant to an IEP in another state transfers to South Carolina Connections Academy, South Carolina Connections Academy will, in consultation with the parents of the pupil, provide the pupil with a FAPE including services which are comparable to the services described in his/her previous IEP. South Carolina Connections Academy shall continue to provide such a free appropriate public education to the pupil until such time as the school conducts an evaluation of the pupil and develops a new IEP for the pupil, if determined appropriate, in accordance with applicable federal and state law.
- o If the IEP does not reflect a virtual placement, and based on its evaluation after the student has been enrolled in the program for at least 45 days – in compliance with state and federal law – the South Carolina Connections Academy IEP Committee (which may include representation from the SCPCSD and/or local school district) determines that the student's needs will not be appropriately met in the least restrictive environment with a virtual setting, South Carolina Connections Academy will refer the student back to his or her current school/resident district to secure a setting in which the IEP can be effectively implemented. A representative

of the district of residence will be invited to participate in the IEP team meeting to assure their agreement. South Carolina Connections Academy ensures the participation of all disability types in its school program and that specific disability types will NOT be counseled out.

- ii. *describe how the school will implement special education requirements for students with disabilities, including the full range of services and placements that will be made available to those students; and*

For those not familiar with virtual schools, it may be difficult to imagine implementation of IDEA and Section 504 for students who are participating in a public virtual charter school program outside the conventional classroom. There are many similarities between the approach to special education in a virtual public school and that of a traditional school, but also some differences. Specific details of how South Carolina Connections Academy will provide the full continuum of special education services are provided on the following pages.

Although parents and other designated Learning Coaches may play an important role in this virtual school setting, the South Carolina Connections Academy staff of highly qualified, South Carolina certified teachers will in fact be responsible for the day-to-day monitoring of progress for students with special needs. Teachers carry out this responsibility through a variety of means, including monitoring of attendance, participation and performance metrics through the Learning Management System (described in “Student Status/Escalation Process”

on page 6); WebMail, telephone, and LiveLesson communication; and student completion of online quizzes and activities. Students with special learning needs are further assisted by the school's Special Education Coordinator, working closely with a national team of trained virtual school special education consultants, the school's regular education staff, and contracted professionals in the students' communities. These professionals work in close partnership with the Learning Coach (thus allowing the student to benefit from the proven positive impact of parent/family involvement) but the responsibility remains with the professional teachers.

Virtual schools like South Carolina Connections Academy open up a vast range of possibilities and options for the delivery of the full continuum of special education and related services to eligible students as described below. The Governing Boards of Connections Academy public schools work closely with their school's specific state-certified special education personnel to adopt and enforce correct special education policies that reflect state code while striving for optimum parent satisfaction with special education services.

The proposed South Carolina Connections Academy budget and staffing pattern, which includes an appropriately certified Special Education Coordinator, will allow this unique virtual school to provide the full continuum of services to disabled students. These services include but are not limited to:

- consultative support to the South Carolina Connections Academy regular education teachers to provide modification and accommodation to the general education curriculum;
- direct special education support to a student which may be provided via the telephone, Internet, LiveLesson, as well as in person;
- direct related service support (for example, speech-language, occupational or physical therapy, psychological counseling, among others) provided in homes, community sites and therapist offices;
- 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;
- careful logging in the LMS of every conversation (by phone, WebMail, LiveLesson or other means) and consultation with the student and/or parent;
- 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.

It is also worth noting that the individualized focus of a virtual school, along with the one-on-one learning environment, often has a positive impact on students' 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 little special education support to progress satisfactorily in the general education curriculum.

The South Carolina Connections Academy teaching staff will include a Special Education Coordinator, who together with the regular education staff, service providers, and national virtual special education consultants – together with the guidance of SCPCSD and SDE – will be able to effectively meet the needs of special learners. The role and the function of the Special Education Coordinator at South Carolina Connections Academy, who will at a minimum possess full certification in special education, will be to facilitate the implementation of the students' IEPs. The Special Education Coordinator will consult with the general education teachers so that the general education teachers may provide direct instructional support to special education students. Consultation provided by the Special Education Coordinator will include adjustments to the learning environment, modifications of instructional methods, adaptation of curricula, and the use of appropriate accommodations to meet the needs of individual students. If specified by the child's IEP, direct special education will be provided by the Special Education

Coordinator via telephone, Internet, LiveLesson, and in person.

All services will be provided in compliance with South Carolina statute, following a Procedures Manual developed specifically for this school (and reviewed by SDE and SCPCSD personnel). A generic sample of this Procedures Model is included in Appendix H.

- iii. *describe how the school will implement transition services and how assisted technology needs will be addressed.*

South Carolina Connections Academy will provide complete and compliant transition services for students age 14 and older. IEPs for students age 14 or older will include a statement of transition services with regard to the student's course of study, including participation in AP courses or a vocational education program. Beginning not later than the first IEP which is in effect when the student is 16 years of age, each IEP will include appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and where appropriate independent living skills; and transition services, including the courses of study needed to assist the student in reaching those goals.

As a virtual charter school, South Carolina Connections Academy will devote special care to ensuring that students in need of assistive technology will receive it. Students in similar schools nationally have received screen readers, special keyboards/entry devices, and other special assistive technology to ensure full participation in the program.

E. Student Assessment

Describe the charter school's plan for evaluating pupil achievement and progress toward accomplishing the school's achievement standards. Include state-mandated assessments and other assessments and a timeline for meeting these standards and the procedures to be taken if pupil achievement falls below the standards.

1. Student Achievement and Progress Evaluation

Describe the school's plan for evaluating student achievement and student progress toward accomplishing the school's achievement standards at each grade level. Include state-mandated assessments and other assessments.

South Carolina Connections Academy shall adhere to the same accountability measures, administer the same state assessments and follow the same proficiency measures as all public schools in South Carolina as mandated by the South Carolina Education Accountability Act, as well as additional specific requirements for virtual charter schools as defined in H3097. **South Carolina Connections Academy will administer all state-mandated assessments at secure in-person locations within reasonable distance of its students' homes, proctored by personnel trained in all relevant testing procedures.**

Beyond the state-mandated assessments, South Carolina Connections Academy's internal assessment efforts begin with a thorough placement process and progress assessment, offered online and offline, which help to customize the student's academic program and formulate the Personalized Learning Plan. South Carolina Connections Academy will also utilize ongoing online and offline assessments to measure student progress on the curriculum, and an integrated standardized assessment tool to measure student gains over the school year.

Specifically, South Carolina Connections Academy shall use the following assessments to measure pupil progress:

- **Placement process:** As part of the application process, South Carolina Connections Academy works with parents of incoming students to determine the appropriate grade level placement for each child. Students identified as potentially working significantly above or below grade level take a placement test.
- **Yearly progress:** In the value-added model of academic growth upon which South Carolina Connections Academy is based, each student will demonstrate at least a year of academic growth for a year in school. Growth will be measured in part based on the results of the student's previous year performance on the PACT, but additional performance measures will be provided through the use of the school's standards-based, technology-facilitated Longitudinal Evaluation of Academic Progress (LEAP) pre- and post-test to gauge each student's academic growth over the course of the year.
- **Ongoing informal assessments:** During each phase of their curriculum mastery, students will engage in several assessments that tap into all levels of student thinking. Such assessment activities include: scored daily assignments, daily "checks for understanding" requiring students to apply and integrate new skills in a thoughtful manner, and regular online quizzes to measure understanding of newly presented material. Other more subjective assessment activities include written journal responses and group discussions.
- **Unit assessments and portfolios:** Each subject in the South Carolina Connections Academy curriculum is broken into logical units of study.

Throughout each unit, students are required to complete a series of offline and online assessments. Offline assessments may include written compositions, science lab reports, short answers and essays, book responses, and a variety of work samples, which will make up a student's portfolio. These assessments require direct teacher evaluation. Online assessments include several 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 families with immediate objective feedback, while offline assessments provide valuable reflection and expertise from South Carolina Connections Academy's certified program teachers. Student report cards and grades will ultimately include a balanced combination of quizzes, tests, work samples (portfolio items) and Learning Coach feedback.

- **In-person assessment:** In keeping with H3097, South Carolina Connections Academy will administer at least one proctored assessment per semester in the core curriculum areas.
- **State standardized testing:** South Carolina Connections Academy is dedicated to meeting and exceeding all of South Carolina's state standardized testing and grade level requirements – including but not limited to PACT, HSAP, and End of Course tests – and will ensure 95% participation by its students in these South Carolina required tests. Connections Academy schools nationally averaged 97% participation in state testing in 2006-07. The state-mandated assessments will be administered to students in person, face-to-face, and proctored locations within a

reasonable distance from students' homes. Results of these annual assessments will be reported through the SCPCSD and SDE as well as communicated directly to South Carolina Connections Academy families and other stakeholders.

- **School evaluation:** All Connections Academy stakeholders nationally participate in an independent satisfaction survey administered via the Internet each spring, with response rates of greater than 65%. In the most recent survey, more than 93% of parents graded the Connections Academy program A or B.

2. Performance Goals Timeline

Provide a timeline for meeting the school's long-term performance goals. Include documentation that the expected yearly progress will meet or exceed the expectation of adequate yearly progress as established in No Child Left Behind.

As articulated in Goal 3 of the academic goals, above, South Carolina Connections Academy students will first meet and then exceed performance by comparable students in the South Carolina required tests. **The goals are recapped below, and a timeline for meeting them is shown on page 76-A.**

- **Measurable Objective 1:** South Carolina Connections Academy will make AYP, beginning with the first year of school operations. **Data Source and Reporting:** South Carolina required test results together with other criteria (such as attendance and test participation) as defined and reported by the State Department of Education.
- **Measurable Objective 2:** By Year 5 of the charter, the school will meet or exceed statewide averages on the required South Carolina standardized tests.

Data Source and Reporting: South Carolina required test results reported through the State Department of Education and the SCPCSD.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Progress Toward Goal</u>
<u>Year 1 (2008-09)</u>	<u>School will make AYP</u> <u>Including Percent Tested; Graduation and Attendance, and Student Performance Objectives</u>
<u>Year 2 (2009-10)</u>	<u>School will make AYP</u> <u>Including Percent Tested; Graduation and Attendance, and Student Performance Objectives</u>
<u>Year 3 (2010-11)</u>	<u>School will make AYP</u> <u>Including Percent Tested; Graduation and Attendance, and Student Performance Objectives</u>
<u>Year 4 (2011-12)</u>	<u>School will make AYP</u> <u>Including Percent Tested; Graduation and Attendance, and Student Performance Objectives</u>
<u>Year 5 (2012-13)</u>	<u>School will make AYP as noted above</u> <u>PLUS</u> <u>Percentage of students scoring proficient and above will equal or exceed state percentage</u>

3. Academic Assistance

Describe the procedures to address the needs of students who do not perform at acceptable levels of proficiency in the statewide assessment program.

South Carolina Connections Academy employs a multi-tiered intervention model so that all students have access to the curriculum and instructional resources they need to be successful. The school's Student Support Team meets on a weekly basis to discuss students who are struggling academically to develop an intervention plan and strategies for improvement, which may include use of Tier 2 – Supplemental Programs and Supports or Tier 3 – Alternative Programs depending on the student's needs.

Students who are working below grade level based on LEAP or PACT scores will also benefit from PACE (Program for All Children to Excel), a South Carolina Connections Academy intervention program focusing on building proficiency in reading and math skills. Parents are notified in the fall that their students qualify for PACE, and their cooperation is secured for a series of intensive LiveLessons – real-time interactive web conferences – with the student and his or her teacher focusing on areas of weakness. The child continues in the regular curriculum during the PACE program, but the LiveLesson sessions allow for very focused remediation on topics likely to be problematic on the next state assessment. The PACE program was first implemented in schools using the Connections Academy program in 2006-07 and early results are promising based on state test performance.

Students who are struggling but whose test scores are not low enough to warrant participating in PACE will benefit from ongoing individualized intervention by their South Carolina Connections Academy teacher.

F. Budget and Accounting System

Provide a plan for the charter school that is economically sound and in compliance with state and federal requirements, including a proposed budget for the term of the charter and the manner in which an annual audit will be conducted.

South Carolina Connections Academy has a complete and comprehensive financial plan in place for school launch and beyond, based on currently available documented revenues and revised projected expenses as of December 4, 2007. A revised five-year budget for the school, integrating SDE account codes, is provided in Appendix I-REVISED.

The budget was developed using a series of conservative assumptions which have been validated by the experiences of virtual schools in other states but will be new for the State of South Carolina. The narrative below explains and documents these assumptions

1. Annual Budget

Using a spreadsheet format (for example, Excel), provide a budget for each year of the term of the charter. Include the following information:

a. Revenues:

- i. *Revenue account codes must be in accordance with the State Department of Education (SDE) Financial Accounting Handbook for South Carolina school districts.*

Required revenue account codes are included in the budget shown in

Appendix I. Since the actual revenues that will be available to charter

schools authorized by SCPCSD is are still unknown, the revised budget

was formed based on recent verified communications from discussions—
by SCPCSD and SDE (see Appendix J – REVISED). The base,
unweighted per-pupil allocation used for budgeting purposes is \$3,373,

which was then weighted by grade level and other factors as directed by published SDE guidance. The additional six categories of funding identified in SDE official guidance were then added as appropriate. The average revenue per pupil calculated across all grade levels and student populations is \$3,825. Based on all of the expense assumptions discussed below, the Charter Committee has determined that an additional flat (not to be weighted) per-pupil allocation of \$1,975 of state funds will be needed to permit effective charter school operations. The total average per pupil revenue in state funds is \$5,800, which is within the range of funding available to traditional public schools in South Carolina.

The budget also presumes Special Education funding based on specific disabilities expected to be found within the South Carolina Connections Academy student population (based on experience in other states). In addition, South Carolina Connections Academy intends to apply for a Charter Implementation Grant (funded through SDE from the federal Public Charter School Grant Program), as described in iii below. If this federal grant is not secured by the school, Connections Academy LLC will provide an equivalent grant.

Given that final funding for SCPCSD schools is still a moving target, Connections Academy, LLC has committed to providing South Carolina Connections Academy a no-cost loan to cover the shortfall between verified funding and the severely reduced expenses identified in section b., below.

- ii. *Documentation from the SDE of estimated revenues in accordance with the allocations in S.C. Code Ann. § 59-40-140(A)-(D) must accompany the budget.*

~~Because South Carolina Connections Academy is applying for authorization by the SCPCSD, final and official documentation by SDE of estimated revenues is not yet available. Many promising discussions between SCPCSD and SDE have been held, but formal concrete guidance is yet forthcoming. Appendix J-REVISED includes the best most recent documentation of funding from the SDE~~

available as of ~~October 11~~December 4, 2007, the date that South Carolina Connections Academy filed this these charter application revisions.

- iii. *If the budget includes funds acquired through grants, provide evidence that the funds, including federal public charter school start-up grants, are likely to be received and explain the terms of the projected grants.*

South Carolina Connections Academy intends to apply for a Charter Implementation Grant (funded through SDE from the federal Public Charter School Grant Program), which is shown as \$200,000 per year for the first two years of the school's operations. Connections Academy, LLC has committed to providing an equivalent grant if the federal charter grant is not secured.

b. Expenditures:

- i. *Expenditure account codes must be in accordance with the SDE Financial Accounting Handbook for South Carolina school districts.*

Required expenditure account codes are included in the budget shown in Appendix I. Specific anticipated expenditures are highlighted below.

- ii. *Provide information of anticipated expenditures, using the same budget codes that are required of school districts. Include all costs associated with initial implementation and continued operation, including but not limited to instructional and support costs for*
 - *salaries,*

Staff salaries (including both teachers and administration) have been calculated based on average anticipated salary per FTE, multiplied by FTEs needed to accommodate student enrollment in the revised budget, which projects a higher student-to-teacher ratio than the original budget to accommodate reduced funding. Salary and benefit

details are shown on the next page and are captured with account codes in the five-year budget in Appendix I.

- *employee benefits,*

See above and next page.

REVISED STAFF SALARIES AND BENEFITS

		<u>Staffing Determination</u>				
		<u>2008-09</u>	<u>2009-10</u>	<u>2010-11</u>	<u>2011-12</u>	<u>2012-13</u>
K-5 Enrollment		<u>230</u>	<u>230</u>	<u>230</u>	<u>230</u>	<u>230</u>
6-12 Enrollment		<u>271</u>	<u>271</u>	<u>271</u>	<u>271</u>	<u>271</u>
Total Enrollment		<u>500</u>	<u>500</u>	<u>500</u>	<u>500</u>	<u>500</u>
Special Ed Enrollment	15%	<u>75</u>	<u>75</u>	<u>75</u>	<u>75</u>	<u>75</u>
<u>Staffing</u>						
Principal		<u>1.00</u>	<u>1.00</u>	<u>1.00</u>	<u>1.00</u>	<u>1.00</u>
Assistant Principal	700	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>
Administrative Assistant	500	<u>1.00</u>	<u>1.00</u>	<u>1.00</u>	<u>1.00</u>	<u>1.00</u>
Special Ed Coordinator		<u>1.00</u>	<u>1.00</u>	<u>1.00</u>	<u>1.00</u>	<u>1.00</u>
Guidance Counselor (6-12)		<u>1.00</u>	<u>1.00</u>	<u>1.00</u>	<u>1.00</u>	<u>1.00</u>
subtotal administration		<u>4.00</u>	<u>4.00</u>	<u>4.00</u>	<u>4.00</u>	<u>4.00</u>
Elementary Teachers (K-5)	50	<u>4.50</u>	<u>4.50</u>	<u>4.50</u>	<u>4.50</u>	<u>4.50</u>
Secondary Teachers (6-12)	50	<u>5.40</u>	<u>5.40</u>	<u>5.40</u>	<u>5.40</u>	<u>5.40</u>
Homeroom Teachers	250	<u>0.60</u>	<u>0.60</u>	<u>0.60</u>	<u>0.60</u>	<u>0.60</u>
Special Ed Teachers	50	<u>1.00</u>	<u>1.00</u>	<u>1.00</u>	<u>1.00</u>	<u>1.00</u>
subtotal Teachers		<u>11.50</u>	<u>11.50</u>	<u>11.50</u>	<u>11.50</u>	<u>11.50</u>
Total Staff		<u>15.50</u>	<u>15.50</u>	<u>15.50</u>	<u>15.50</u>	<u>15.50</u>
<u>Expense</u>						
Principal	85,000	<u>85,000</u>	<u>85,000</u>	<u>85,000</u>	<u>85,000</u>	<u>85,000</u>
Assistant Principal	60,000	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Administrative Assistant	27,000	<u>27,000</u>	<u>27,000</u>	<u>27,000</u>	<u>27,000</u>	<u>27,000</u>
Special Ed Coordinator	65,000	<u>65,000</u>	<u>65,000</u>	<u>65,000</u>	<u>65,000</u>	<u>65,000</u>
Guidance Counselor	50,000	<u>50,000</u>	<u>50,000</u>	<u>50,000</u>	<u>50,000</u>	<u>50,000</u>
Admin Salaries		<u>227,000</u>	<u>227,000</u>	<u>227,000</u>	<u>227,000</u>	<u>227,000</u>
Benefits	17.00%	<u>38,590</u>	<u>38,590</u>	<u>38,590</u>	<u>38,590</u>	<u>38,590</u>
Pension Social	12.63%	<u>28,670</u>	<u>28,670</u>	<u>28,670</u>	<u>28,670</u>	<u>28,670</u>
Security	6.20%	<u>14,074</u>	<u>14,074</u>	<u>14,074</u>	<u>14,074</u>	<u>14,074</u>
Medicare Tax	1.45%	<u>3,292</u>	<u>3,292</u>	<u>3,292</u>	<u>3,292</u>	<u>3,292</u>
Admin Benefits		<u>84,626</u>	<u>84,626</u>	<u>84,626</u>	<u>84,626</u>	<u>84,626</u>
Elementary Teachers (K-5)	35,000	<u>157,500</u>	<u>157,500</u>	<u>157,500</u>	<u>157,500</u>	<u>157,500</u>
Secondary Teachers (6-12)	40,000	<u>216,000</u>	<u>216,000</u>	<u>216,000</u>	<u>216,000</u>	<u>216,000</u>
Homeroom Teachers	35,000	<u>21,000</u>	<u>21,000</u>	<u>21,000</u>	<u>21,000</u>	<u>21,000</u>
		<u>394,500</u>	<u>394,500</u>	<u>394,500</u>	<u>394,500</u>	<u>394,500</u>
Benefits	17.00%	<u>67,065</u>	<u>67,065</u>	<u>67,065</u>	<u>67,065</u>	<u>67,065</u>
Pension Social	12.63%	<u>49,825</u>	<u>49,825</u>	<u>49,825</u>	<u>49,825</u>	<u>49,825</u>
Security	6.20%	<u>24,459</u>	<u>24,459</u>	<u>24,459</u>	<u>24,459</u>	<u>24,459</u>
Medicare Tax	1.45%	<u>5,720</u>	<u>5,720</u>	<u>5,720</u>	<u>5,720</u>	<u>5,720</u>
Teacher Benefits		<u>147,070</u>	<u>147,070</u>	<u>147,070</u>	<u>147,070</u>	<u>147,070</u>
Special Ed Teachers	45,000	<u>45,000</u>	<u>45,000</u>	<u>45,000</u>	<u>45,000</u>	<u>45,000</u>
Benefits	17.00%	<u>7,650</u>	<u>7,650</u>	<u>7,650</u>	<u>7,650</u>	<u>7,650</u>
Pension	12.63%	<u>5,684</u>	<u>5,684</u>	<u>5,684</u>	<u>5,684</u>	<u>5,684</u>
Social Security	6.20%	<u>2,790</u>	<u>2,790</u>	<u>2,790</u>	<u>2,790</u>	<u>2,790</u>
Medicare Tax	1.45%	<u>653</u>	<u>653</u>	<u>653</u>	<u>653</u>	<u>653</u>
Special Ed Teacher Benefits		<u>16,776</u>	<u>16,776</u>	<u>16,776</u>	<u>16,776</u>	<u>16,776</u>
Total Staff Salaries		<u>666,500</u>	<u>666,500</u>	<u>666,500</u>	<u>666,500</u>	<u>666,500</u>
Total Staff Benefits		<u>248,471</u>	<u>248,471</u>	<u>248,471</u>	<u>248,471</u>	<u>248,471</u>
Total Staff Expense		<u>\$914,971</u>	<u>\$914,971</u>	<u>\$914,971</u>	<u>\$914,971</u>	<u>\$914,971</u>

Staffing Determination		2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
K-5 Enrollment		474	710	947	1,194	1,421
6-12 Enrollment		526	780	1,063	1,318	1,579
Total Enrollment		1,000	1,500	2,000	2,500	3,000
Special Ed Enrollment		100	100	100	375	480
Staffing						
Principal					1.00	1.00
Assistant Principal					3.00	4.00
Administrative Assistant					5.00	8.00
Special Ed Coordinator					1.00	1.00
Guidance Counselor (6-12)					2.00	2.00
Assistant Administrator					2.00	14.00
Elementary Teachers (K-5)					3.00	29.00
Secondary Teachers (6-12)					2.00	39.00
Homeroom Teachers					5.00	8.00
Special Ed Teachers					8.00	10.00
Assistant Teachers					1.00	83.00
Total Staff					8.00	97.00
Expenses						
Principal					.000	85,000
Assistant Principal					.000	240,000
Administrative Assistant					.000	182,000
Special Ed Coordinator		85,000	85,000	85,000	85,000	85,000
Guidance Counselor		80,000	80,000	80,000	75,000	100,000
Admin Salaries			314,000	401,000	463,000	555,000
Benefits	17.00%	83,380	88,170	77,010	88,080	110,840
Pension	12.83%	38,888	80,848	57,214	71,388	82,348
Social Security	8.20%	18,488	24,882	28,088	35,030	40,424
Medicare Tax	1.45%	4,953	5,815	8,588	8,183	8,464
Admin Benefits		117,088	148,483	188,878	210,832	243,088
Elementary Teachers (K-5)	35,000	315,000	480,000	830,000	805,000	880,000
Secondary Teachers (6-12)	40,000	880,000	780,000	1,040,000	1,280,000	1,880,000
Homeroom Teachers	35,000	70,000	105,000	140,000	175,000	210,000
		885,000	1,365,000	1,810,000	2,280,000	2,790,000
Benefits	17.00%	143,850	230,350	307,700	384,200	487,800
Pension	12.83%	114,302	171,137	228,803	285,438	347,325
Social Security	8.20%	88,110	84,010	112,220	140,120	170,800
Medicare Tax	1.45%	13,123	18,888	28,265	32,770	38,875
Teacher Benefits		337,384	505,144	674,788	842,528	1,025,200
Special Ed Teachers	45,000	135,000	225,000	270,000	360,000	460,000
Benefits	17.00%	22,880	38,280	45,800	61,200	78,800
Pension	12.83%	17,081	28,418	34,101	45,488	58,835
Social Security	8.20%	8,370	13,880	18,740	22,320	27,800
Medicare Tax	1.45%	1,888	3,283	3,815	5,220	6,825
Special Ed Teacher Benefits		40,328	83,880	100,888	134,208	187,780
Total Staff Salaries		1,364,000	1,881,000	2,833,000	3,185,000	3,882,000
Total Staff Benefits		884,771	738,617	844,302	1,187,388	1,438,028
Total Staff Expenses		\$1,368,771	\$2,119,617	\$3,477,382	\$4,372,388	\$5,320,028

DELETED AND
REPLACED WITH
PREVIOUS CHART

- *purchased services (includes insurance and transportation),*

Purchased services include those for which South Carolina Connections Academy anticipates contracting with Connections Academy, LLC, as detailed in the sample draft professional services agreement shown in Appendix L. All services will be carried out under the direction of the Governing Board based on line-item budget approval and Board review/approval of all invoices. These services include ongoing curriculum support services provided by Connections Academy Education Resource Center; technology support for students, parents and teachers; “back office” school administrative services (such as financial accounting, preparation of SASI transmissions and reports to SDE, school district notifications, student performance analysis, board support and resources, and all property and casualty insurance coverage purchased for the school at favorable group rates); enrollment services and student records management; staff recruiting and human resources functions carried out under Governing Board direction; and marketing/student recruitment following plans specifically approved by the Governing Board. Specific expenses for these services proposed to be purchased from Connections Academy, LLC, are shown on the next page as they appear in the Revised Five Year Budget in Appendix I and as they correspond to the Draft Professional Services Agreement in Appendix L. Additional purchased services will include legal and accounting services that the Governing Board will contract for independent of

Connections Academy

Purchased services shown in Revised Five Year Budget (Appendix I) and detailed in proposed Draft Professional Services Agreement (Appendix L).

<u>Code</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Factor</u>	<u>Per</u>	<u>Prof Servs Agreement</u>
<u>110310</u>	<u>Educational Resource Center</u>	<u>\$126</u>	<u>per student, average enrollment</u>	<u>2.8, 8.2.b(i)(2)</u>
<u>110345</u>	<u>Technical Support and Repairs</u>	<u>\$150</u>	<u>per student, average enrollment</u>	<u>2.12, 8.2.b(i)(2)</u>
<u>230310</u>	<u>Enrollment and Records Management</u>	<u>\$50</u>	<u>per student, total enrollment</u>	<u>2.13, 8.2.b(ii)</u>
<u>260310</u>	<u>Human Resources Support</u>	<u>\$1,500</u>	<u>per employee</u>	<u>2.7(b), 8.2.b(ii)</u>
<u>250320</u>	<u>Facility Support Services</u>	<u>\$10,000</u>	<u>per location</u>	<u>2.15, 3.2, 8.2.b(ii)</u>
<u>250310</u>	<u>Accounting and Regulatory Reporting</u>	<u>\$50</u>	<u>per student, average enrollment</u>	<u>2.16, 2.18, 8.2.b(ii)</u>
<u>250590</u>	<u>Financing Fee</u>	<u>1.50%</u>	<u>based on all revenue (except interest income)</u>	<u>2.18, 8.2.b(ii)</u>
<u>260310</u>	<u>Marketing Services</u>	<u>1.00%</u>	<u>based on all revenue (except interest income)</u>	<u>5.4, 8.2.b(ii)</u>
<u>230310</u>	<u>Special Ed Oversight / Liability</u>	<u>2.50%</u>	<u>based on all revenue (except interest income)</u>	<u>2.14, 8.2.b(iii),</u>
<u>230310</u>	<u>School Administration</u>	<u>6.50%</u>	<u>based on all revenue (except interest income)</u>	<u>8.2.b(iv)</u>

- *supplies and materials (includes noncapital equipment), and*
Supplies and materials shown in the five-year budget with appropriate accounting codes include all Connections Academy virtual school student curriculum – print and hands-on as well as technology-based.
The curriculum cost varies by grade: \$600 per student per year for

kindergarten; \$950 per student per year for grades 2-5; and \$1,075 per student per year for grades 6-12. A complete set of curriculum for teacher use is included as School Curriculum Supplies. The Revised Five-Year Budget shown in Appendix I does not include student technology; the The cost for student technology (one computer with printer per household plus Internet subsidy) is \$737 including shipping. , while tThe cost for the Learning Management System (which provides courseware and communications while also serving as a student information system) is \$600 per student. These costs are cross-referenced in the table below with the draft Professional Services Agreement.

<u>Code</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Factor</u>	<u>Per</u>	<u>Prof Servs Agreement</u>
<u>220490</u>	<u>School Curriculum Supplies</u>	<u>\$500</u>	<u>per number of teachers at year end</u>	<u>2.9</u>
<u>110445</u>	<u>NOT INCLUDED IN REVISED BUDGET</u> <u>Student Technology Assistance</u>	<u>\$577</u>	<u>computer and printer per household</u>	<u>2.11</u>
<u>110445</u>	<u>NOT INCLUDED IN REVISED BUDGET</u> <u>Internet Subsidy</u>	<u>\$160</u>	<u>reimbursement per household per year</u>	<u>2.11</u>
<u>110445</u>	<u>Software - Student and SIS</u>	<u>\$600</u>	<u>per student, average enrollment</u>	<u>2.10, 8.2.b(i)(2)</u>
<u>110420</u>	<u>Texts and Instructional Materials</u>	<u>\$950 or \$1075</u>	<u>per student depending on grade level</u>	<u>2.1-2.4, 8.2.b(i)(1)</u>

The Revised Five-Year Budget in Appendix I also projects expenses for mMaterials and supplies for the school headquarters, the primary workplace for the teaching staff, include full sets of _____ curriculum,

-hardware and software for the teachers, and plus typical office supplies.

- *capital outlay.*

The budget includes a modest outlay for capital expenditures, primarily for purchase of office furniture and machinery. Capital outlay will also cover any needed renovations to the office space, subject to the Charter School Facilities Notification process.

c. Budget and Accounting Management:

Explain who will be managing the budgeting/accounting function for the charter school. Please list the name, address, and contact number for the person/company managing the budget/accounting function for the Charter School. If the local district will serve as the fiscal agent for the Charter School, please indicate that in your explanation.

The operating structure of South Carolina Connections Academy will be similar to a traditional educational environment, with a Business Manager who will implement the fiscal policies and procedures approved by the Governing Board. The Governing Board may choose to contract this Business Manager function to Connections Academy, LLC (1000-1001 Fleet St., Fifth Floor, Baltimore,

MD 21202, 800-382-6010), which would also serve as a fiscal agent for the school as it does for Connections Academy schools in multiple other states. See sample draft professional services agreement in Appendix L for proposed details. Under Governing Board direction, business matters, including development of budgets, creation of financial systems, and fiscal and student attendance reporting, will be carried out by the Business Manager. The Business Manager will also act in an information and advisory capacity to the Governing Board on fiscal issues. The need for new fiscal 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 counsel.

South Carolina Connections Academy will practice sound financial management, beginning with a rigorous budgeting development process. The school will begin the annual budgeting process in March with an enrollment target set by the Governing Board. The school's Business Manager will coordinate the development of revenue and expenditure assumptions based upon this enrollment target. This will be a very iterative process and involve the appropriate stakeholders – Governing Board, Principal, teachers, and outside consultants, if necessary. Once an initial budget has been drafted, it will be tested against a lower enrollment level to ensure the school can withstand lower-than-expected enrollment. As more information is learned, assumptions will be revised and the impact discussed with the Governing Board.

Once the fiscal year begins, the school will maintain the discipline of a complete reforecast of the year on a monthly basis. During this reforecast, all revenue and expenditure assumptions will be revised, as appropriate. The result of this process will be reviewed with the Governing Board at its regular meetings (see Section G). By continually revising its forecast, the Governing Board will be aware of developing situations that require their attention and action. Due to the importance of sound fiscal management, this discussion will be one of the first items on the Governing Board's agenda. The Governing Board will participate in regular board training with an emphasis on fiscal management and oversight, including training offered by the South Carolina Association of Public Charter Schools, SDE or SCPCSD, and the South Carolina Association of School Business Officers.

In terms of financial oversight and management, the South Carolina Connections Academy Governing Board is ultimately responsible for the overall financial management of the school. The Board will designate one of its members to serve as the Treasurer of the school. This individual will have a financial background to enable him/her to perform this function. The Board will also engage an independent accounting firm that will be responsible for preparing annual audited financial statements and any other reports, as required by state statute or regulation.

2. Annual Audit

Describe the annual audit of the financial and administrative operations of the school. Include evidence that the school will adhere to the accounting, auditing, and reporting procedures and requirements that are applied to public schools operating in South Carolina. Demonstrate how accounting, auditing, and

reporting requirements comply with the principles set forth in the following publications published annually by the Office of District Auditing and Field Services:

- a. Single Audit Guide,*
- b. Financial Accounting Handbook, and*
- c. Funding Manual.*

The South Carolina Connections Academy Governing Board will engage an independent accounting firm that will be responsible for preparing annual audited financial statements and an audit of administrative operations. Funds are budgeted for this purpose as shown under Bookkeeping and Audit in the five-year Budget in Appendix I. In order to provide SCPCSD, SDE and the Governing Board with as much early notice as possible, this audit will be conducted as soon after the fiscal year end as practicable.

South Carolina Connections Academy will adhere to the accounting, auditing, and reporting procedures and requirements that are applied to public schools operating in South Carolina and will comply with the principles articulated in the Single Audit Guide, Financial Accounting Handbook, and Funding Manual. Specifically, South Carolina Connections Academy will maintain the following fiscal management principles and practices to ensure that, (1) expenditures are authorized by and in accordance with amounts specified in the Board-adopted budget, (2) the school's funds are managed and held in a manner that provides a high degree of protection of the school's assets, and (3) all transactions are recorded and documented in an appropriate manner:

- ***Segregation of Duties:*** South Carolina Connections Academy 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 the Principal, who will review the proposed expenditure to determine whether it is consistent with the Board-adopted budget and sign the check request form. All check requests and purchase orders over One Thousand Dollars (\$1,000) must be co-signed by the Principal and a Board member who has been approved as a signatory on the school's checking account. Payments for invoices for operational services contracted by the school do not need to be countersigned.

All transactions will be posted on an electronic general ledger. The transactions will be posted on the ledger by school staff or a contracted bookkeeper. To ensure segregation of recording and authorization, the bookkeeper may not co-sign check requests or purchase orders. An industry-standard accounting software program will be used to ensure proper bookkeeping is maintained and that reports will be provided in the format required by the SCPCSD.

- ***Banking Arrangements/Reconciliation:*** South Carolina Connections Academy 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. For all funds, the Board must appoint and approve all individuals authorized to sign checks in accordance with these policies.

Bank statements from private banking institutions will be sent directly to the school's bookkeeper for reconciliation. A written report of results of the

reconciliation will be provided to the Board Treasurer. A reconciliation of the school's savings and checking account, showing all transactions, will be provided to the Governing Board at every meeting.

- **Purchasing Procedures:** South Carolina Connections Academy will comply with purchasing policies developed and approved by its Governing Board. The Principal or designee may purchase supplies, materials, equipment, and services up to the amounts specified in the approved budget or per an approved Board action, ensuring the above procedures are followed.

3. Pupil Accounting System

Provide documentation regarding the pupil accounting system, including evidence that the school will adhere to the procedures and regulations that are applied to public schools operating in South Carolina. The pupil accounting system must comply with the principles included in the South Carolina Pupil Accounting Manual and the South Carolina Student Accountability Manual, published by the SDE.

South Carolina Connections Academy is thoroughly prepared to meet all requirements of the South Carolina Pupil Accounting and Student Accountability systems in recording, verifying, and reporting the school's Average Daily Membership. South Carolina Connections Academy will also meet the requirements of H3097 regarding accounting for virtual charter school students.

South Carolina Pupil Accounting and Student Accountability Systems:

The South Carolina Connections Academy Learning Management System (LMS) closely tracks student attendance data and facilitates careful verification of this data according to the classifications under EFA; this LMS performs a similar function in 12 states, each with its own reporting requirements. South Carolina Connections

Academy stands prepared to arrange successful transmission of this data into the State Department of Education's SASI database two times per year as required for school funding.

Compliance with H3097: H3097, which was passed by the South Carolina General Assembly to amend the Charter Schools Law to allow virtual charter schools, includes several requirements regarding student accounting. South Carolina Connections Academy will address these requirements as follows:

H3097 Section (E) Private or homeschool students choosing to take courses from a virtual charter school may not be provided instructional materials, or any other materials associated with receiving instruction through a program of online or computer instruction at the state's expense.

All students who enroll in South Carolina Connections Academy will be full-time public school students. South Carolina Connections Academy does not anticipate offering courses to students who are enrolled in private schools or homeschools.

H3097 Section (F) Only students enrolled in the charter school as a full-time student shall be reported in the charter school's average daily membership to the State Department of Education for the purposes of receiving state or federal funds. Private and homeschool students may not be included in the student weighted pupil units or average daily membership reported to the State Department of Education for the purposes of receiving state or federal funds.

All students who enroll in South Carolina Connections Academy will be full-time public school students, and only these students will be reported in the charter school's average daily membership to the State Department of Education for the purposes of receiving state or federal funds.

4. Negotiated Services Documentation

Provide documentation of any negotiated services provided by the local school district or the SCPCSD, including but not limited to financial accounting, payroll services, food services, custodial services, maintenance, curriculum, library and media services, and warehousing. Documentation should show evidence of agreement between the charter school and the school district or the SCPCSD.

South Carolina Connections Academy does not anticipate contracting for services with SCPCSD or any local school district. However, South Carolina Connections Academy does anticipate negotiating a contract for services (including financial accounting, payroll, and curriculum) with Connections Academy, LLC. This contract will be materially the same as the A-sample draft professional services agreement is shown in Appendix L, which the Charter Committee has reviewed and is prepared to finalize as soon the Charter Committee becomes the Interim Governing Board . ~~The Governing Board,~~ represented by its own counsel, expects to enter into negotiations on this agreement upon approval of the charter.

The materials and services covered by the contract have been cross-referenced in the Section F-1-b, above.

The Interim Governing Board will be advised by its own legal counsel in the finalizing this contract with Connections Academy, LLC. If desired, before formally executing and signing the contract, the Interim Governing Board will provide the contract for review by SCPCSD and the SDE.

G. Governance and Operation

Describe the governance and operation of the charter school.

1. Non-Profit Corporation Status

Include a copy of the non-profit corporation's articles of incorporation and bylaws to document that the charter school is organized as a South Carolina non-profit corporation.

See Appendix K for South Carolina Connections Academy's Articles of Incorporation and draft bylaws, which document that South Carolina Connections Academy is organized as a South Carolina non-profit corporation. Note that the bylaws will remain in draft form until the duly formed Governing Board reviews, revises and approves them.

2. Governing Board

- a. **Describe the election process of the governing board. Include when the elections will occur and the voting procedures. The procedures should provide that parents or legal guardians shall have one vote for each student enrolled in the school.**

Upon approval of the charter, the Charter Committee of the South Carolina Connections Academy will become the school's Interim Governing Board, serving until formal elections are held in mid-October 2008, and yearly thereafter. ~~can be held during the school's first year of operation.~~ Members of the permanent Governing Board will be chosen in that election by employees of the school and by ~~and by~~ parents with students enrolled in South Carolina Connections Academy, who will be entitled to one vote for each of their enrolled children. See Revised By-Laws in Appendix K-1.

As a statewide virtual charter school, South Carolina Connections Academy will use technology to facilitate Governing Board nominations as well as the election voting process. The seated Governing Board (or Interim Governing Board in the first year) will create a Nominating Committee to coordinate a Call for Nominations each September through the LMS. Anyone in the larger school community (which is South Carolina as a whole) can nominate themselves or another person by submitting an online form. The Nominating Committee will screen the nominees to ensure compliance with the law (e.g., no convicted felons), and may invite additional nominees to ensure all seats will be filled.

The election will be held via technology, using the secure LMS to facilitate anonymous online voting with careful control of voting integrity. Nominees' photos and candidate statements will be featured via the LMS for voters to review for at least two weeks before voting takes place. When the "polls" open, each voter will have one unique URL for each voting right. The voting will take place over multiple days, for up to one week, with votes tabulated via a secure third-party service. The secure online site and links will facilitate anonymous online voting with careful control of voting integrity. Final results will be certified by a third party and announced to all stakeholders. Once each new Governing Board is seated, the Board members will choose officers as per the by-laws.

~~The election will be held via technology, using the secure LMS to facilitate anonymous online~~

~~voting with careful control of voting integrity. Since parents will be located throughout the State of South Carolina, so will Governing Board members, with nominees representing parents, educators, business leaders, and representatives of community-based organizations. Per the draft bylaws, both the Interim Board and the permanent Governing Board will be comprised of no fewer than five (3) and no more than (9) voting members. The powers of the Interim Board shall be the same as those of the permanent Governing Board. These powers are described in the proposed by-laws shown as Appendix K.~~

No member of the Interim or permanent Governing Board of the South Carolina Connections Academy shall be an employee or independent contractor or otherwise be compensated by the South Carolina Connections Academy except as specifically allowed by the conflict of interest provisions set forth in applicable South Carolina and federal law.

In addition to participating in the orientation program required in 59-40-155, South Carolina Connections Academy Governing Board members will have the opportunity to participate in the extensive Board Academy training program developed by Connections Academy with Greater Capacity Inc. (www.greatercapacity.org), which includes the Effective Board Governance of Public Charter Schools online training module series as well as state-specific training provided both face-to-face and in print. Training topics include charter school basics, non-profit management, conflict of interest, effective meetings, policy development and human resources oversight.

The powers of the Governing Board are described below and in the revised by-laws shown as Appendix K-1.

b. Describe the authority of the governing board to develop policies, make decisions, and execute each of the following responsibilities:

The operating structure of the school will be similar to a traditional educational environment, with a Principal, hired by the Board, who will supervise administrative staff and teachers who implement the curriculum according to the policies and procedures approved by the Governing Board. The Principal will also act in an information and advisory capacity to the Governing Board and will be responsible for implementing board policies in the day-to-day operation of the school. 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 counsel.

i. *employing and contracting with teachers and nonteaching employees;*

The Principal will make recommendations to the board regarding the hiring and firing of employees, but the Governing Board will be the final decision maker in all ultimate employment matters, following the school's Employee Manual (see sample draft in Appendix M), which the Governing Board will review, revise and approve.

ii. *ensuring that all certified personnel and noncertified teachers undergo the background checks and other investigations before they are employed in the school;*

The South Carolina Connections Academy Governing Board will ensure that all personnel undergo required background checks and other investigations before they are employed in the school.

iii. *contracting for other services, including but not limited to transportation, financial accounting, and legal;*

The Governing Board shall negotiate and oversee contracts for services such as financial accounting, legal services, and other services.

- iv. *developing pay scales, performance criteria, and discharging policies for its employees, including the school's administrator;*

The Governing Board shall develop and adopt pay scales, performance criteria, a performance appraisal system, and discharging policies for all employees, include the Principal. Explanation of such policies will be integrated into the Employee Manual adopted by the Governing Board.

- v. *deciding all other matters related to the operation of the school, including budgeting, curriculum, and operating procedures; and*

Under the Governing Board's direction, business matters, including development of budgets, creation of financial systems, and fiscal and student attendance reporting, will be carried out by the Business Manager.

The day-to-day Business Manager functions will be contracted to either Connections Academy or another consultant, with oversight by the Governing Board.

- vi. *ensuring that the school will adhere to the same health, safety, civil rights, and disability rights requirements as are applied to all public schools operating in the same school district.*

The South Carolina Connections Academy 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 the SCPCSD.

c. Provide evidence that the school and its governing body will comply with the Freedom of Information Act. Specifically address policies regarding student records, administrative records, and meetings.

South Carolina Connections Academy and its Governing Board will comply with the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act, which defines the responsibilities of the Governing Board to conduct its business “in the sunshine” as an entity receiving public funds.

The South Carolina Connections Academy Governing Board shall meet regularly (at least 10 times per year) in open, public meetings to fulfill its duties, and may from time to time create subcommittees or task forces to carry out special tasks. Special and emergency meetings shall be held as needed. All meetings involving a quorum of the Governing Board shall be noticed and conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act. The Governing Board shall consider at its annual organizational meeting what constitutes compliant notice to the public of its open meetings, including regular, special and emergency meetings, within the strictures of the Freedom of Information Act. The Governing Board shall thereafter pass an appropriate resolution adopting policies and procedures for compliance with the notice procedures it has adopted.

The Governing Board shall keep written minutes of all its meetings. The minutes shall include, at a minimum, the date, time and place of the meeting, the names of members in attendance and absent, the substance of the proposals considered and a record of any decisions and votes taken that show how each member voted. Draft minutes shall be prepared within ten working days after the meeting and shall be approved, amended or

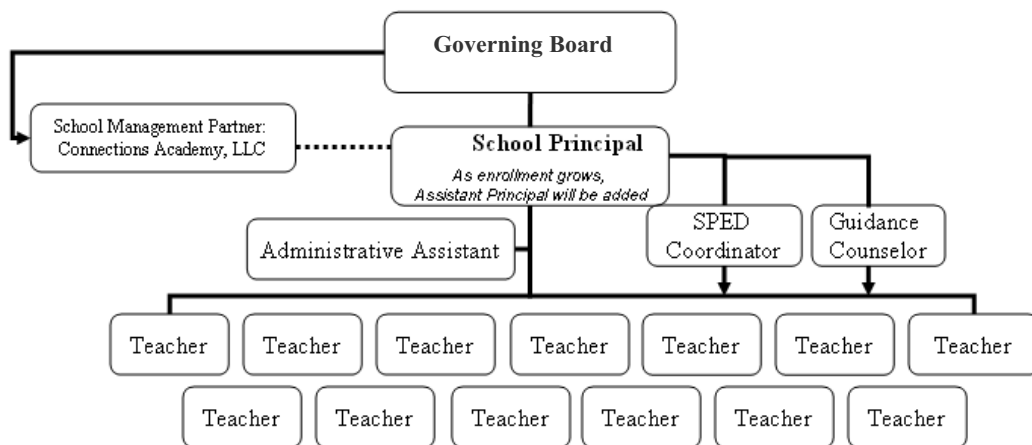
disapproved at the next meeting where a quorum is present. Minutes shall not become official until approved by the Governing Board. All minutes shall be made available for public inspection.

South Carolina Connections Academy will also operate in compliance with FERPA, which protects student and family information from being revealed or released to non-authorized parties. FERPA protections are especially important in a virtual school, which collects extensive data about every student and his or her family and maintains this data electronically. South Carolina Connections Academy will consult SDE, SCPCSD and its own counsel in any instance in which a Freedom of Information Act requirement appears to conflict with a FERPA requirement.

3. Administrative Structure

Describe the administrative structure of the charter school, including the roles and responsibilities of each administrative staff member.

The operating structure of South Carolina Connections Academy will be similar to a traditional educational environment, with Principal and other administrators



Note: As instructional staff expands, school will designate Lead Teachers to mentor/guide teachers

implementing the policies and procedures of the Governing Board while supervising the teaching staff. The chart above shows the basic operational structure.

Under Governing Board direction, business matters, including development of budgets, creation of financial systems, and fiscal and student attendance reporting, will be carried out by the Business Manager (which may be a contracted function provided by the school management partner). The Business Manager will also act in an information and advisory capacity to the Governing Board on fiscal issues.

4. Parental, Community, and Educator Involvement

Describe the nature and extent of parental, community, and professional educator involvement in the governance and operation of the school.

Parents/families, educators and the community are involved with both the **governance** and **operation** of South Carolina Connections Academy.

Governance: Through outreach by the Governing Board Nominating Committee and school staff, South Carolina Connections Academy will encourage parents, community members and professional educators (though not educators working for the school) to run for Governing Board positions each election cycle. The Charter Committee includes both a current and a retired South Carolina teacher, as well as a developer of a brick and mortar charter school in Clarendon County – any of whom may decide to be future candidates for the Governing Board. The Governing Board may form ad hoc advisory committees of parents, community members and educators who are not Board members to provide guidance to the Board on particular issues such as community partnerships and neighborhood outreach. Finally, all stakeholders will be urged to participate in monthly Governing

Board meetings and to provide input in person, by phone, or via email on issues of importance.

Operation: Parents and family involvement is absolutely central to the operation of the South Carolina Connections Academy school model; see Section D for details regarding the role of parents and other “Learning Coaches.” In addition to involvement focused on their own children’s learning needs, South Carolina Connections Academy parents will have multiple opportunities to shape the overall school experience. They can volunteer to serve as Community Coordinators (see Definitions on pages 5-7), arranging field trips and other face-to-face activities among South Carolina Connections Academy families who live nearby in keeping with H3097. ~~Parents may be selected to serve as a parent member of the Governing Board, or serve on ad hoc groups convened by the Governing Board to focus on particular issues such as community partnerships and neighborhood outreach.~~

The community for South Carolina Connections Academy is the state as a whole, with specific interest on the part of youth-serving organizations, support groups for families with special circumstances, and organizations involved with

workforce development. The Charter Committee has discussed the school model with ProParent, the Boys and Girls Clubs, the Urban League, the South Carolina State Chamber of Commerce, and others, all of whom have invited the school to keep in touch about its progress and possible future inter-relationships.

Educators Professional educators beyond the school staff are also crucial to the operation of also support South Carolina Connections Academy. The Charter Committee includes both a current and a retired South Carolina teacher, as well as a developer of a brick and mortar charter school in Clarendon County. In addition, more than 25 South Carolina educators have already expressed interest in working for the school and have added their names to the petition shown in Appendix D. For example, As noted in Section C, above, preliminary discussions have been initiated with Columbia College regarding partnerships between South Carolina Connections Academy and the college's Education Department for teacher professional development (possibly focusing on the college's unique Master's in Divergent Learning), student teacher placement, and collaborative research activities. Partnerships such as these are a hallmark of Connections Academy-affiliated schools nationally.

H. Administrative and Teaching Staff

Provide evidence that the charter school will employ administrators and teachers in a manner consistent with the South Carolina Charter Schools Act and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002.

The revised chart below shows anticipated FTE headcounts for administrators, teachers, and other staff based on student enrollment each year. Specific qualifications for each position follow.

Staffing Determination		<u>2008-09</u>	<u>2009-10</u>	<u>2010-11</u>	<u>2011-12</u>	<u>2012-13</u>
K-5 Enrollment		<u>230</u>	<u>230</u>	<u>230</u>	<u>230</u>	<u>230</u>
6-12 Enrollment		<u>271</u>	<u>271</u>	<u>271</u>	<u>271</u>	<u>271</u>
Total Enrollment		<u>500</u>	<u>500</u>	<u>500</u>	<u>500</u>	<u>500</u>
Special Ed Enrollment	15%	<u>75</u>	<u>75</u>	<u>75</u>	<u>75</u>	<u>75</u>
Staffing						
Principal		1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Assistant Principal	700	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Administrative Assistant	500	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Special Ed Coordinator		1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Guidance Counselor (6-12)		1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
subtotal administration		<u>4.00</u>	<u>4.00</u>	<u>4.00</u>	<u>4.00</u>	<u>4.00</u>
Elementary Teachers (K-5)	50	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.50
Secondary Teachers (6-12)	50	5.40	5.40	5.40	5.40	5.40
Homeroom Teachers	250	0.60	0.60	0.60	0.60	0.60
Special Ed Teachers	50	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
subtotal Teachers		<u>11.50</u>	<u>11.50</u>	<u>11.50</u>	<u>11.50</u>	<u>11.50</u>
Total Staff		<u>15.50</u>	<u>15.50</u>	<u>15.50</u>	<u>15.50</u>	<u>15.50</u>

Staffing Determination		<u>2008-09</u>	<u>2009-10</u>	<u>2010-11</u>	<u>2011-12</u>	<u>2012-13</u>
K-5 Enrollment		474	710	947	1,184	1,421
6-12 Enrollment		<u>526</u>	<u>790</u>	<u>1,053</u>	<u>1,316</u>	<u>1,579</u>
Total Enrollment		1,000	1,500	2,000	2,500	3,000
Special Ed Enrollment	15%	150	225	300	375	450
Staffing						
Principal						1.00
Assistant Principal						4.00
Administrative Assistant						6.00
Special Ed Coordinator						1.00
Guidance Counselor (6-12)						2.00
subtotal administration		6.00	8.00	9.50	12.00	14.00
Elementary Teachers (K-5)	50	9.00	14.00	18.00	23.00	28.00
Secondary Teachers (6-12)	40	13.00	19.00	26.00	32.00	39.00
Homeroom Teachers	250	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	6.00
Special Ed Teachers	40	3.00	5.00	6.00	8.00	10.00
subtotal Teachers		27.00	41.00	54.00	68.00	83.00
Total Staff		33.00	49.00	63.50	80.00	97.00

**DELETED AND
REPLACED WITH ABOVE**

1. Administrative Staff

Provide the qualifications and/or vita of each administrative position, including the principal and guidance counselor. Identify any administrative staff members who have already been selected and attach their resumes to the application.

- **Principal:** South Carolina Connections Academy's instructional leader will be the Principal. While this person has not yet been selected, the qualifications for the position are as follows:

- The South Carolina Connections Academy Principal will possess an advanced degree either a current South Carolina certification in administration or at least one year of experience in school-based administration.~~and an appropriate administrative credential.~~
- ~~A minimum of three years of management or administrative experience (a former principal or master teacher is ideal).~~
- Technology literacy and good communication skills.
- Must be able to 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 South Carolina Connections Academy Principal shall be offered a performance contract that includes provisions regarding the due process protections to be afforded to Principals and the procedures for termination (see also Section M). This performance contract will also include any performance criteria or goals negotiated between the South Carolina Connections Academy Governing Board and the Principal.

- **Assistant Principal:** As South Carolina Connections Academy grows, it will add one or more Assistant Principal positions to help the Principal in carrying out administrative duties. Candidates for this position will be largely be recruited from within the school staff.
- **Guidance Counselor:** South Carolina Connections Academy's Guidance Counselor will possess valid school counseling credential and have a minimum of 3 years experience as a high school counselor in South Carolina.

At South Carolina Connections Academy, the Guidance Counselor will serve grades 6-12.

2. Teachers

Provide a list of anticipated teaching positions. Include the following information:

- a. the grade or grades and content area the teachers will instruct,*
- b. the qualifications/certification that will be required for teachers, and*
- c. provisions for special education teachers to be certified in each of the areas of disability for students needing special education.*

- **Teachers:** To be hired at South Carolina Connections Academy, teachers will be expected to possess:

- An appropriate South Carolina teaching credential.
- A Bachelor's degree at minimum.
- Certification that they are highly qualified for the assigned grades/subject matter.
- Skills in teaching a standards-based curriculum and incorporating innovative approaches to instruction.
- Good communication skills.
- Technology literacy.

All South Carolina Connections Academy teachers will be South Carolina certified and highly qualified according to NCLB standards. All administrators will be appropriately certified.

At least one teacher on staff will have certification in special education, in one or more of the areas of disability for students needing special

education, and as the school enrollment grows, dedicated Special Education teachers with certifications in identified areas of disability will be added to work under the direction of the and the staff will have a Special Education Coordinator (see below). Ideally, one teacher will also have certification as an ELL teacher, though this number may vary depending on the enrollment of students with ELL needs.

- **Special Education Coordinator:** South Carolina Connections Academy's Special Education Coordinator will be an appropriately credentialed special educator with 5 or more years of experience in modifying curriculum and instruction for students with a variety of special needs. The Special Education Coordinator will be certified in one or more of the areas of disability for students needing special education, and any Special Education teachers hired to work under the Special Education Coordinator's supervision will have complementary certifications such that all disability areas will have at least one certified teacher represented on staff.

I. Racial Composition

Describe how the charter school intends to ensure that the enrollment of the school is similar to the racial composition of the school district or the targeted student population. Include an assurance that the school will comply with any desegregation plan or order in effect in the school district.

1. Racial Composition

Indicate the racial composition of the school district and the racial composition of the student population the school intends to target.

South Carolina Connections Academy will serve the entire state of South Carolina.

According to the most recent Census Bureau figures, the racial composition of the entire state is as follows:

White persons, percent, 2005	68.4%
Black persons, percent, 2005	29.2%
American Indian and Alaska Native persons, percent, 2005	0.4%
Asian persons, percent, 2005	1.1%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, percent, 2005	0.1%
Persons reporting two or more races, percent, 2005	0.8%
Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin, percent, 2005	3.3%
White persons not Hispanic, percent, 2005	65.5%

In other states, Connections Academy virtual charter schools have racial/ethnic compositions that essentially mirror the state as a whole. It is anticipated that South Carolina Connections Academy will have a racial composition similar to the entire state of South Carolina. The student population that that school intends to target – children who seek an alternative to the traditional classroom for whatever reason – is quite diverse, including students from all racial and ethnic backgrounds as well as diverse economic backgrounds. As a statewide school serving every county and

community in the state, South Carolina can actually be expected to be more integrated than most brick-and-mortar schools that serve specific local neighborhoods.

2. Policies and Procedures

Describe the policies and procedures for recruiting students. Explain how the recruiting procedures can be expected to result in a pool of student applications that is similar to the racial composition of the school district or the targeted student population.

South Carolina Connections Academy will actively recruit families that represent the full cultural, demographic and socioeconomic range of the state. To do so, South Carolina Connections Academy will use a variety of means to inform families about its services and provide them an equal opportunity to enroll, including:

- **Direct mail:** After approval of the charter, South Carolina Connections Academy will conduct one or more direct mail campaigns announcing the school to families with children throughout the state. In a typical mailing, South Carolina Connections Academy will send out a postcard inviting parents to attend an Information Session (see below), visit the website, and/or contact the call center. The school may also use email to supplement its physical mail campaign.
- **Information Sessions:** South Carolina Connections Academy will conduct multiple Information Sessions – in person and “virtually,” using its LiveLesson technology – for families throughout the state. South Carolina Connections Academy will use these sessions to provide a complete array of information

about its program, including its curriculum, teaching methods, technology resources and testing requirements.

- **Website:** South Carolina Connections Academy will launch and maintain a website (www.connectionsacademy.com) that contains information about the proposed charter school, its Personalized Performance Learning approach, and its curriculum. The site also contains regularly updated Frequently Asked Questions and their answers along with contact information for the Governing Board and administration.
- **Telephone/e-mail information service:** South Carolina Connections Academy will launch and maintain a toll-free information line (800-382-6010) and an email information service (info@connectionsacademy.com) to answer parents' questions about the school.
- **Search engines:** South Carolina Connections Academy will be linked to leading Internet search engines with local reference capability to help South Carolina families looking for a virtual school option to find this high-quality charter school.
- **Community and youth services partnerships:** As part of its outreach process, South Carolina Connections Academy will provide information about the school to community, family, and youth-serving organizations such as local Boys and Girls Clubs and the Urban League; reach out to residential facilities; and seek partnerships with parent groups (such as ProParent), health-related organizations; and organizations for young performers and athletes.

- **School district referrals:** South Carolina Connections Academy will take every opportunity to brief school administrators and guidance personnel throughout the state on South Carolina Connections Academy as an alternative for students who might benefit from individualized instruction in a non-classroom setting.
- **Media outreach:** South Carolina Connections Academy will make limited use of paid media, primarily advertisements in community newspapers and radio announcements, but will take full advantage of the local media's interest in promoting community events relevant to South Carolina residents in order to inform parents about South Carolina Connections Academy informational sessions and to raise awareness of the school.
- **Word of mouth/parent referrals:** After the first year of operation, current South Carolina Connections Academy parents will play a leading role in serving as a source of information about the school and referring other families.

3. Desegregation Plan or Order

Include the following documents to ensure compliance with a desegregation plan or order:

- a letter from the district indicating whether the school will be subject to a desegregation plan or order,*
- a copy of any desegregation plan or order to which the school will be subject,*
- an explanation of how the school's policies and procedures comply with the desegregation plan or order, and*
- a letter from the district that indicates whether the school's proposed policies and procedures comply with any desegregation plan or order in effect in the district or whether clarification must be received from the Office for Civil Rights.*

South Carolina Connections Academy has requested and received a letter from the SCPCSD indicating that the school will not be subject to a desegregation plan or order. The letter of request from the Charter Committee and the response from the SCPCSD are shown below. ~~Not applicable. The South Carolina Public Charter School District does not have a desegregation plan or order in place.~~



**SOUTH CAROLINA
CONNECTIONS ACADEMY**

November 16, 2007

Tom DeLoach, Chairman
Dr. Barbara Nielsen, Interim Superintendent
South Carolina Public Charter School District
VIA email

Dear Mr. DeLoach and Dr. Nielsen:

As a charter applicant seeking authorization from the South Carolina Public Charter School District (SCPCSD) for a statewide virtual charter school, **South Carolina Connections Academy** was recently informed that it must request a letter from the SCPCSD indicating whether or not our school would be subject to any desegregation plan or order.

We had previously understood that this requirement might not be applicable to schools applying for authorization by SCPCSD, which is why we had not requested a letter from you before our application was submitted. We very much appreciate your assistance in correcting this unintentional oversight on our part.

If you could forward the SCPCSD response letter directly to me by email, fax, or regular mail at your earliest convenience, we would be very grateful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Theresa C Edwards".

Theresa Edwards
Chairperson
South Carolina Connections Academy Charter Committee

13 Private Street
York, SC 29745
Phone: 803-628-7554
Cell Phone: 803-984-2319
Fax: 678-559-0751
E-mail: Ttce1@bellsouth.net

**South Carolina Public Charter School District
3710 Forest Drive- Suite 203
Landmark Building
Columbia, South Carolina 29204**

**November 13, 2007
Theresa Edwards
Chair, Connections Academy
13 Private Street
York, SC 29745**

Dear Theresa,

This is to verify that the proposed South Carolina Connections Academy Charter School, Inc. has applied to the SC Charter Public Statewide School District. The state of South Carolina is not under a desegregation order.

This is based on a list maintained by the SC Department of Education, Office of General Counsel and is based on information occasionally received from the US Department of Justice. The Office of General Council cannot insure that the information in this document is up-to-date.

As no orders have been issued in recent years, it would seem to verify that South Carolina Connections Academy Charter School is not under an order.

Sincerely,

**Barbara S. Nielsen, Ed.D.
Interim Superintendent, SC Public Charter School District**

J. Transportation

Describe how the charter school intends to meet the needs of its students.

1. Transportation Needs

Describe how the school will provide or facilitate transportation for a student who is unable to attend school because of lack of transportation.

Students at South Carolina Connections Academy will not require transportation services for regular school activities which will occur primarily in their homes and immediate vicinities. While the school will offer many field trips and other activities to bring students, families and school staff together face to face (see Section D for details), none of these are mandatory for students and their families.

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; b) proctored assessments; and c) state standardized tests, which students will take at secure locations proctored by trained school personnel.

South Carolina Connections Academy families who do not have ready transportation to required face-to-face events and cannot be accommodated through public transportation or parent carpools may request transportation assistance from the school. South Carolina Connections Academy may provide such assistance either directly, by arranging for a vehicle (following all necessary safety and insurance requirements in doing so, as discussed under item 3, below), or indirectly, through reimbursement for public or private transport.

While South Carolina Connections Academy will help facilitate local extracurricular and recreational activities among students and their families, the families will be responsible for providing their own transportation for these activities. Any parent transporting students other than their own children in their car to school-organized events will sign appropriate waivers/release forms and will provide proof of liability insurance to the school.

2. School Bus

If the school will provide transportation by school bus, include a plan that complies with the state requirements for drivers and training and the state safety requirements for school buses.

Not applicable.

3. Contracted Services

If the school intends to contract with the district or a third party for transportation services, describe those services, and attach a proposed contract with the application, including the name and address of the party providing the services.

If South Carolina Connections Academy provides transportation for any special event, the school will assure that such transportation meets all applicable safety standards and bears any motor vehicle insurance required under South Carolina law.

4. Special Needs Students

Explain how students with special needs will be served in accordance with state and federal law.

Special education students whose IEPs specify in-person contract services outside their homes will be provided transportation, either through a properly bonded and

insured provider or through reimbursements to parents choosing to provide their own transportation. The cost of transportation for IEP-mandated services will be included in the overall cost of providing special education services to these students.

K. Facilities and Equipment

Describe the charter school's building, facilities, and equipment and explain how they will be obtained.

1. Identified Facility

The facility for South Carolina Connections Academy, which will be the school's headquarters/teaching center, has not yet been identified, although several suitable prospects have been researched and are shown in Appendix P. Further details of the facility plan are discussed in 2, below.

2. Facility Not Identified

If the charter school has not identified a suitable facility, specify a plan for obtaining such a facility. Include the following:

a. a description of the facility needs;

As a virtual charter school, South Carolina Connections Academy will not require a physical facility for day-to-day learning. Students will work from the setting of their families' choice, such as the home or a supervised community location. South Carolina Connections Academy does anticipate leasing permanent office space in the Columbia area to serve as a "teaching center" where the school's administrative and teaching staff will work on a daily basis. Several appropriate prospective facilities are profiled in Appendix M, and the South Carolina Connections Academy charter school budget includes funds for lease of such a facility, estimated at current market prices. The school will follow all necessary steps of the Office of School Facilities Charter School Facilities Notification Process in securing its facility.

The South Carolina Connections Academy administrative office/teaching facility will be in a location providing good access for administrators and teachers and any students or parents who visit the school. The facility will have adequate space for teacher cubicles, a Principal's office, a conference room, and a break room/kitchenette. The facility will have a certificate of occupancy, be air-conditioned, heated and illuminated with fluorescent lights, provide male and female bathrooms and parking, will be handicapped accessible, and will be fully equipped with sprinklers and other fire safety equipment. The facility will provide the necessary infrastructure to support the required computer network. Facility maintenance will be the responsibility of the commercial space provider. South Carolina Connections Academy has included a budget provision for contracting for cleaning service and any other miscellaneous facility expense under Facilities Support.

In addition to following the Charter School Facilities Notification Process laid out by the Office of School Facilities, South Carolina Connections Academy will use the following criteria in selecting its facility:

- Proposed office space must be considered "Class B" type (may consider "Class C" office space depending on the availability price and location).
- Office space is in compliance with or capable of modification to bring it into compliance with all local building, zoning and health and safety requirements.

- Office is located close to at least one main thoroughfare to allow for ease of access by teachers as well as by visiting students and parents.
- Office meets all local minimum Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards.
- Office is in a safe neighborhood and has ample parking accommodations.
- Office is available to move-in within 3-6 months from the date of search.
- Office is comprised of approximately 20% office space and 80% open area for cubicles.

The school estimates approximately 125 square feet per person to meet its minimum requirements, allowing for necessary common space, egress, typical build out for conference room and kitchen(ette). Thus, the facility the school is seeking will be approximately 2,500 square feet, and have adequate space for teacher cubicles (beginning with 10 -12 in the first year, based on projected enrollment), a Principal's office, a conference room, and a break room/kitchenette. The facility will have an appropriate certificate of occupancy and will comply with all health and safety regulations.

Because students will be present in the school headquarters only on an occasional drop-in basis, and will not gather there for instructional activities, no special zoning will be required beyond standard commercial use.

b. a statement as to whether an existing facility will be remodeled or a new facility will be built; and

South Carolina Connections Academy expects to lease an office facility that requires little or no remodeling; no new facility will be built. Since the facility will serve as the school office and teaching center but will not be a location of instruction for students on a regular basis, any remodeling will be simply to configure the office space for the necessary number of teacher cubicles, administrator offices, and conference rooms. The leased space will be expected to comply with all applicable fire, safety and health codes for conventional office space.

c. a schedule for completing or obtaining a suitable facility. If applicable, include a description of and timeline for any plan to raise funds for completing or obtaining the facility.

A complete plan and timeline for obtaining the facility, including compliance with the OSF Charter School Facilities Notification process, is included in Appendix P.

3. Equipment

Describe the equipment that will be used to support the proposed curriculum and explain how the equipment will be obtained.

The equipment for South Carolina Connections Academy students (e.g., a loaned computer and printer plus a subsidized Internet connection) is described in Section F and will not be present in the facility, but instead will be shipped to students' homes.

The South Carolina Connections Academy school headquarters facility described above will be equipped with standard office furniture, computers and related technology for staff, and standard business equipment such as photocopy machine, fax machine, and so on. In addition, the facility will require a phone system

and high-speed Internet access. Procurement of this equipment will be implemented by the Connections Academy facilities/operations staff following the charter school's approved budget under the direction of the Governing Board. Connections Academy brings both technical expertise and bulk purchasing power to this task, and has been able to equip similar sized schools in 12 other states using the most cost-effective combinations of leased, purchased, and landlord-supplied equipment.

- ***Office furniture and equipment:*** The South Carolina Connections Academy teaching center will be outfitted with standard office furniture. For example, teacher cubicles might include furniture such as a desk with return, file drawers, bookshelf, chair, and cubicle walls with appropriate posting surfaces. The Principal's office will be similarly outfitted. A conference room with table and chairs will provide meeting space. Such standard equipment as a photocopy machine, fax machine, and mailroom equipment will be available for staff use. The office will also be equipped with telephone service and high-speed Internet access. Fireproof, locking storage cabinets will also be installed for secure storage of student records. The cost of this furniture and equipment is included in the South Carolina Connections Academy budget.
- ***Computer equipment:*** Each teacher will have a computer with monitor, as will the Principal. All will be connected to a robust office network that includes such technology as printers, scanners, a multi-media LiveLesson station, and the like – among the technologies related to the virtual education program used by South Carolina Connections Academy as described above. The cost of this equipment is included in the South Carolina Connections Academy budget.

L. Employee Relations

Explain the relationship that will exist between the charter school and its employees, including evaluation procedures.

1. Employment Process

Describe the process that will be used to advertise for, select, and employ instructional staff and other employees.

The South Carolina Connections Academy Governing Board will make all hiring and compensation decisions for administrative and instructional staff; however, the Board anticipates contracting the recruitment and screening of employees to Connections Academy, LLC as part of its school management services contract (see Appendix L).

To hire a Principal, the Connections Academy human resources staff will carefully develop a job description reflecting the job requirements detailed in Section H and approved by the Governing Board. The job listing will then be posted to education employment websites and other sources. Applicants will be required to complete an employment application and provide a resume. Connections Academy human resources staff will evaluate the applications and resumes, and conduct preliminary verification of information provided on applications and resumes of applicants who will be further considered for employment. As part of the employment application process, applicants will be required to sign release forms authorizing Connections Academy (and its authorized agents) to conduct background investigations on the applicants. Interviews, background checks and fingerprinting follow, along with screening techniques such as initial interviews, writing

assignments, etc. Connections Academy staff will then present one or more suitable Principal candidates to the Governing Board, who will either select one or request additional candidates. Once a candidate is selected, an offer will be made to the candidate by a representative of the Governing Board.

Once the South Carolina Connections Academy Principal is in place, the hiring decisions for instructional staff and other employees will be his/hers, subject to final approval by the Governing Board. However, as part of its anticipated school management obligation under the professional services agreement, Connections Academy, LLC will conduct all the initial and ongoing staff recruitment drives for these employees, following a process similar to that described above for the Principal search. As part of the employment application process, applicants will be required to sign release forms authorizing Connections Academy (and its authorized agents) to conduct background investigations on the applicants. Interviews, background checks and fingerprinting follow, along with screening techniques such as practice writing assignments. The South Carolina Connections Academy Principal will make final selection of instructional staff, subject to approval by the Governing Body. Note that all South Carolina Connections Academy teachers will hold a South Carolina license and will be highly qualified as defined by NCLB.

2. Teacher Evaluations

Describe in detail the procedure that will be used for the evaluation of teachers.

The South Carolina Connections Academy Governing Board, in consultation with the Principal and teachers, shall adopt a staff evaluation process based on similar procedures used successfully in other Connections Academy virtual schools

across the nation. Many aspects of the evaluation process for teachers will mirror the individualized educational process for students at South Carolina Connections Academy, drawing on the strengths of the Learning Management System and the school's belief in continuous improvement for all stakeholders.

All South Carolina Connections Academy teachers will be currently certified by the State of South Carolina to teach in a public elementary or secondary school. At the beginning of each school year (no later than 40 days after school starts), the Principal will work with each teacher to develop a individualized evaluation plan with measurable objectives linked to the competencies with specific indicators by career-ladder licensure level for each teacher (see below), as well as the previous year's evaluation, if applicable.

Teachers will be evaluated by the Principal using data captured by the LMS, which allows for both detailed "observation" of educator practice and specific, objective assessment of student performance. For example, the Principal will review the number and quality of contacts between the teacher and each of his/her students during this period, as recording by the LMS log and tracking tools. Each teacher will have one major annual evaluation as well as up to two other evaluations during the year, and will be encouraged to engage in self-reflection on their evaluation plan. The school will provide coaching and administrative intervention as needed.

In addition, the South Carolina Connections Academy Governing Board may review and adapt the "**career ladder**" process in use by other Connections Academy-affiliated schools nationally. Each rung on the ladder increases

responsibility and financial reward for those who are selected and who are successful:

- I. Teacher – entry level teacher; properly certified or licensed; expected to perform all teaching responsibilities and other duties as assigned

- II. Coordinator Teacher – serves as a mentor for entry-level teacher; assumes at least one major additional responsibility assigned by the principal; passes Level I Online Teacher Exam.
- III. Lead Teacher – serves as a mentor for entry-level teacher; assumes at least two major additional responsibilities assigned by the principal; passes Level II Online Teacher Exam; completes Connections Academy graduate course in Online Learning with a grade of a B or higher.
- IV. Master Teacher – serves as a mentor for entry-level teacher; assumes at least two major additional responsibilities assigned by the principal; assumes some supervisory responsibilities (teacher-student ratio may be adjusted); passes Level III Online Teacher Exam; completes Connections Academy graduate course in Online Learning with a grade of a B or higher.

3. Terms and Conditions of Employment

Explain how the school will address its employment policies with affected employees.

The terms and conditions of employment will be fully addressed with all affected employees. An Employee Handbook (see sample draft in Appendix M, which will be considered and revised by the Governing Board) will serve as the basis for staff orientation and training, with each employee required to sign indicating review. All South Carolina Connections Academy employees will receive training in regard to this handbook.

M. Grievance and Termination Procedures

Include a reasonable grievance and termination procedure for the charter school's employees.

1. Teacher Employment and Dismissal Procedures

- a. If the school will adopt the procedures for the employment and dismissal of teachers outlined in S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-410 et seq. (1990), include a letter of agreement from the local school district.*

Not applicable – see below.

- b. If the school does not adopt the procedures outlined in S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-410 et seq. (1990), explain the school's employment and termination procedures that will provide for notice and a right to a hearing before the governing board.*

South Carolina Connections Academy will have a fair and clearly understood process and procedure for employment, evaluation and termination for all employees. Evaluation procedures are discussed in detail in the previous section. Regarding employment and termination, the Charter Committee has adopted the following policies, beginning on the next page. Governing Board will develop and adopt policies relating to these processes and procedures before the beginning of school, and which will be integrated these into the school's Employee Handbook (expected to be materially the same as the sample shown in Appendix M) to be approved by the Interim Governing Board and provided to all staff before the beginning of school. (see sample draft in Appendix M, which the Governing Board will review, revise and adapt). Key aspects may include a defined process for employee evaluation with several

~~reviews per year (as described above) and a mechanism for corrective action notices and planning. The Board's policies will also include an issue resolution process through which an employee may address problems or~~

Teacher Employment and Dismissal Policy and Procedures

(adopted by the South Carolina Connections Academy

Charter Committee)

At-Will Employment

Employment at South Carolina Connections Academy is "at will," which means that there is no contract binding either the employee or the employer to an agreement of employment for a specified period of time. Employment can be terminated by either the employee or the employer at any time, for any reason. However, South Carolina Connections Academy is committed to providing a fair and well-understood process for evaluating employee performance, resolving issues and problems, and conducting corrective action that can help both employees and employer avoid terminations while providing appropriate notice and due process when a termination is unavoidable.

Standards of Conduct

In an effort to provide employees with comfortable and safe working conditions, South Carolina Connections Academy will maintain standards of professional behavior that all employees must follow. Although there is no

way to identify every possible example of prohibited conduct, the following is a **partial** list of infractions that may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

- Perpetrating fraud against the employer or its customers, business associates, or clients
- Theft, misappropriation, unauthorized possession, use of or removal of the employer's property by others
- Carrying weapons or explosives, or violating any criminal law while on the employer's property or on employer business
- Fighting or otherwise threatening, intimidating, coercing, or interfering with managers, co-workers, or guests
- Using profane, obscene, or abusive language while on the employer's property or on employer business
- Sleeping during working hours
- Gambling or other immoral or disorderly conduct while on the employer's property or on employer business
- A pattern of chronic or excessive absenteeism, tardiness, leaving work early, or any other violation of our attendance policy
- Failure to properly notify your manager about an absence
- Failure to satisfactorily perform your job
- Incompatibility with your manager(s) or management
- Intentional abuse or destruction of the employer's property
- Negligent use or care of the employer's property

- Violation of any safety rule, policy, practice, or procedure
- Performing your job in a manner that may cause injury to a person or damage a property, machinery, equipment, supplies, or the business reputation of the employer or associates
- Violation of any provision of our Equal Opportunity policy (or related policies), including, but not limited to, acts of sexual or racial harassment
- Violation of our drug and alcohol policy
- False, fraudulent, misleading, or harmful statements or omissions concerning another employee or our students, parents, associates, or any statement that is harmful or disloyal to the employer
- Insubordination or refusal to comply with instructions, or failure to perform reasonable duties
- Conduct that, in the sole opinion of the employer, reflects adversely on you or the employer
- Other acts that, in the opinion of management, warrant disciplinary action

Notice/Disciplinary Action

Employees are expected to meet certain standards of work performance and conduct. These include, but are not limited to, those outlined above.

Employees who do not meet the standards and expectations will be notified of

same and where appropriate will be given the opportunity to improve performance and/or conduct through the disciplinary process. The nature of the discipline used, up to and including immediate termination of employment, will depend upon the conduct of the employee and the relevant circumstances. It is not a guarantee of continued employment when an employee is placed on an improvement plan as part of the disciplinary process. Employees are expected to meet their performance expectations daily.

If an employee fails to meet the school's expectations and standards, and corrective action is considered appropriate, it may take the form of verbal counseling, written warning or reprimand, improvement plan, probation, suspension (with or without pay), or termination from employment. South Carolina Connections Academy can use any, some, or none of these forms of corrective action, including immediate termination of employment in the case of imminent danger to students.

Issue Resolution Process

South Carolina Connections Academy will encourage 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. If issues persist for an employee, the issue resolution process provides a system for review by higher levels of school administration and Connections Academy Human Resources.

When an employee is faced with an issue, he or she should see their manager first. If the issue remains unresolved, the employee can use the Issue Resolution Process outlined below. Employees should always contact Connections Academy Human Resources immediately to deal with issues of discrimination or harassment.

Steps in the Process

1. Meet with at least two levels of management. An employee must in good faith, make every attempt to resolve the issue with his or her immediate manager and, if that is not successful, then with his or her next level manager.
2. Put the Issue in Writing. If the immediate manager or the next level manager cannot resolve the issue, put the issue in writing. It is important to describe the issue, the desired result, and your proposed solution to the issue. This step should preferably occur within twenty (20) business days of the occurrence of the problem.
3. Meet with Connections Academy Human Resources. After an employee fully describes the issue in writing, Human Resources will help them and their manager consider how policies, procedures, and practices relate for the issue. Often, South Carolina Connections Academy's policies will dictate a resolution to the issue.

4. Present issue to the Governing Board. If Steps 1-3 have been taken but the issue remains unresolved, the employee has the option of bringing the issue to the school's Governing Board, which will review policy and may suggest additional steps (such as mediation).

Termination of Employment

Notice and Severance: South Carolina Connections Academy employees who plan to resign should notify their manager in writing at least two (2) working weeks prior to their last day. For those employees in a supervisory capacity, three (3) weeks of notice is requested. Vacation and other forms of leave are not to be used during the notice period. The purpose for advance notice is to provide for an orderly transition of the employee's duties in a professional manner. Employees who are considered at risk for accessing confidential information during the notice period may have their duties adjusted during this time period or may be requested to work at home or may be excused from their work responsibilities. In this case, the employee will continue to receive their regularly scheduled pay. If notice is received with more than two (2) working weeks notice, the school reserves the right to limit the notice period to a maximum of two (2) working weeks (for supervisory employees, the notice period may be limited to three weeks). The right to work through the end of a notice period is at the discretion of the employer. Employees who do not perform their assigned responsibilities in a

professional manner may have their notice period unilaterally shortened by the employer.

Hearing Before Governing Board: Any employee whom the school has chosen to terminate has the right to request a hearing before the Governing Board. The hearing will be conducted in Executive Session unless otherwise requested by the employee. The Governing Board will then vote on the matter in public session, and its decision will be considered final.

Last Pay and Payment of Leave: Employees who resign or are terminated will be paid through the last day worked, including any overtime worked. Employees will be paid for unused vacation leave according to the terms of the vacation policy. An employee is considered to have terminated employment as of the **last day worked**, for all pay and benefits purposes. Medical, dental, and vision benefits end on the last day of the month in which the employee has terminated employment.

Return of Property and Equipment: Departing employees must return any of items of school or company property in their possession no later than the last regular day of employment. Subject to state law and regulation, the value of any property and equipment issued and not returned in working condition equivalent to when it was received, normal wear and depreciation excluded, may be deducted from the employee's paycheck and the employee may be required to sign a wage deduction authorization for this purpose.

Continuation of Benefits. COBRA stands for the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act. This law allows eligible employees to extend

health insurance for up to eighteen (18) months (at their own expense) following termination of employment. Employees who need information about COBRA should see Connections Academy Human Resources.

Exit Interviews: In instances where an employee voluntarily leaves the employment of South Carolina Connections Academy, the Connections Academy Human Resources Department would like to discuss the reasons for leaving and any other impressions that the employee may have about South Carolina Connections Academy or the company. Employees who voluntarily terminate will be asked to grant an exit interview, with assurance of confidentiality so that during the exit interview the teacher can express himself or herself freely.

disagreements verbally and in writing through an escalation process to the Board itself, including the right to a hearing before termination.

2. Employment and Dismissal Procedures for Administrative, Paraprofessional, and Non-teaching Staff

Provide grievance or termination procedures for administrators, paraprofessionals, and other staff.

The South Carolina Connections Academy process and procedure for employment, evaluation and termination described above for teachers will also apply to administrators, paraprofessionals (if any), and other staff, with the exception that periodic reviews and evaluation of the Principal will be conducted directly by the Governing Board. The South Carolina Connections Academy Principal shall be offered a performance contract that includes provisions regarding the due process protections to be afforded to Principals and the procedures for termination, including a right to a hearing by the Governing Board and, if desired, the SCPCSD.

N. Student Conduct, Rights, and Responsibilities

Include a policy governing student conduct, student rights and responsibilities, and student discipline standards and procedures.

1. Student Conduct

Describe the school's policy that governs student conduct, setting clear expectations for student conduct. Include any disciplinary actions to be taken by the administration for breaches of the student conduct policy.

As a virtual public school, South Carolina Connections Academy provides a school culture that honors the uniqueness of each student and family, as reflected in its flexible scheduling and Personalized Learning Plans, and also underscores the responsibility of each learner for his or her own success. Appropriate conduct is expected of all students at South Carolina Connections Academy. Students at South Carolina Connections Academy are guaranteed due process of law as required by the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, but are also expected to comply with the policies laid out in the School Handbook (see sample in Appendix N; including the South Carolina-specific portion that makes up the final 19 pages of the Appendix; the school's adopted Handbook is expected to be materially the same as this sample) and applicable state law.

The South Carolina Connections Academy Charter Committee Governing Board will also develop has approved the following policies setting forth clear expectations for student conduct and discipline; establishing disciplinary actions for infractions of these policies, including suspension and expulsion and special protections for students with disabilities; and providing due process, including an appeals process, for students. These policies will be integrated into the final version

of the handbook, which will be provided to all parents and students at the beginning of the school year.

Student Conduct and Discipline Policy

These policies and procedures, adopted by the Charter Committee, will be integrated into the South Carolina Connections Academy School Handbook – State Specific Portion (shown as the last 19 pages of Appendix N of the charter application), which will be provided to all incoming students and their families.

Discipline and Due Process for Students

All students enrolled in South Carolina Connections Academy are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the rules for the school, and parents are expected cooperate with the school staff in helping students to maintain this conduct. Students are also guaranteed due process of law as required by the 14th Amendment to the Constitution.

Discipline Measures

There are three levels of disciplinary measures utilized by the school: 1) Warning, 2) Suspension, and 3) Expulsion. Each level has associated conduct breach definitions and corresponding disciplinary actions that may occur.

1. Warning

Students that receive warnings from the school will have a conference (via phone or in person) with their parent/guardian(s) and the school administrator(s), and the incident will be formally documented in writing and will become part of the

student's permanent record. The student will not have a disruption in schooling and will not be removed from the class (the Learning Management System). Warnings are issued when a student demonstrates a breach of expected conduct, but not as serious as those listed under the suspension and/or expulsion categories in this handbook.

2. Suspension

When a student is suspended, he or she is temporarily removed from class (the Learning Management System) or a school sponsored program or activity. The length of a suspension is determined by the school administrator (up to 10 days at a time). A suspension will be documented in writing and will become part of a student's permanent record.

During a period of suspension as defined by the school principal, a student's permission to log on to and/or use parts of the LMS is restricted. Student access to WebMail, the message boards, online clubs/activities, and/or the entire LMS may be revoked. In such cases where the student's access is completely revoked, the Learning Coach is responsible for logging on to the LMS and obtaining the student's assignments, responding to WebMail, and recording assessment responses for the student. The student should continue with his or her schoolwork during a suspension.

Violations that may lead to suspension include, but are not limited to, the following breaches of conduct:

- *Cheating on tests or daily work:* A student who knowingly participates in copying, using another's work, and representing it as his or her own (for

example, students transmitting their work electronically for another student's use), or who provides other students with test answers, answer keys, or otherwise uses unauthorized materials in an assignment or assessment situation.

- *Plagiarism:* A student's use of another person's words, products, or ideas without proper acknowledgement of the original work with the intention of passing it off as his or her own. Plagiarism may occur deliberately (with the intention to deceive) or accidentally (due to poor referencing). It includes copying material from a book, copying-and-pasting information from the Internet, and getting family or friends to help with coursework.
- *Unexcused absence:* An unexcused absence is the absence of a student due to truancy, illegal employment or parental neglect.
- *Illegal absence:* Illegal absences are unexcused absences by a student who is under the age of 17 who are absent from school due to avoidable absences, parental neglect, illegal employment, unapproved family vacations, and truancy.
- *Abusive conduct:* A student who uses abusive language or engages in abusive conduct in the presence of others either in person or electronically/virtually.
- *Bullying:* A student that repeatedly engages in negative actions against another student in an attempt to exercise control over him or her.
- *Harassment:* A student who demonstrates verbal, written, graphic, or physical conduct relating to an individual's sex, race, color, national origin,

age, religious beliefs, ethnic background, or disability that is sufficiently severe, pervasive, or persistent so as to interfere with or limit the ability of an individual to participate in or benefit from the school's programs that: 1) has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating or hostile environment, 2) unreasonably interferes with an individual's educational performance, or 3) otherwise adversely affects an individual's educational opportunities.

- *Vandalism:* A Student who intentionally damages or destroys school property or records (physical or electronic). In these instances the school reserves the right to contact the proper law enforcement agency(ies).
- *Theft and robbery:* A student who takes money or other property (physical or electronic) with the intent to deprive another person or the school of that property. The threat or the use of force or violence is considered a serious breach of conduct. In these instances the school reserves the right to contact the proper law enforcement agency.
- *Sexual harassment:* A student who subjects another to any unwelcome sexual advances including verbal harassment, unwelcome or inappropriate touching, or suggestions, requests, or demands for sexual favors.
- *Violation of acceptable use policy:* Students who violate the acceptable use policy in one form or another are open to disciplinary action including suspension. This would include signing on as parents.
- *Repeated violation of any disciplinary issues:* Included in this category could be when inappropriate items are included in drop boxes after

previous incidents or previous excuses of accidents. (Some sexual related attachments have been included in the past and the reason given was an accident. This may happen once but not repeatedly.)

3. Expulsion

When a student is expelled, he or she is separated from the school for an extended period of time, or permanently, for disciplinary reasons. An expulsion will be documented in writing and will become part of a student's permanent record. Violations that may lead to expulsion include, but are not limited to, any behavior that indicates that a student is a serious threat to the safety of others, possession of firearms, dangerous weapons, bombs, or explosives, criminal behavior, arson, under the influence of or possession of, or sale of controlled substances or paraphernalia. Suspensions or expulsions for children designated as exceptional follow all appropriate state and federal policies, regulations, and laws.

The school will not discipline students protected under Section 504 of the *Rehabilitation Act* of 1973, the *Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act* (IDEA), or the *American with Disabilities Act* (ADA) unless the school complies with the requirements of those acts. Section 118.31, Stats., which prohibits corporal punishment of students, shall apply to the school. Sections 118.32 and 948.50, Stats., which prohibit a strip search of a student, shall also apply to the school.

regarding behaviors particularly relevant to a virtual school, including the following offenses which carry the penalty of suspension (or in the case of repeated violations, expulsion):

=Cheating on tests or daily work: A student who knowingly participates in copying, using another student's work and representing it as his or her own (for example, students transmitting their work electronically for another student's

use), or who provides other students with test answers or answer keys, or otherwise uses unauthorized materials in an assignment or assessment situation.

- **Abusive conduct:** A student who uses or engages in using abusive language or conduct in the presence of others in person or electronically.
- **Vandalism:** A student who intentionally damages or destroys school property or records (physical or electronic). In these instances the school reserves the right to contact the proper law enforcement agency.
- **Theft and robbery:** A student who takes money or other property (physical or electronic) with the intent to deprive another person or the school of that property. The threat or the use of force or violence is considered a serious breach of conduct. In these instances the school reserves the right to contact the proper law enforcement agency.
- **Sexual harassment:** A student who subjects another to any unwelcome sexual advances including verbal harassment, unwelcome or inappropriate touching, or suggestions, requests, or demands for sexual favors.

The Governing Board will also review and approve a School Handbook (see sample, Appendix N) which lays out the code of conduct for students and includes steps to be followed in the event of misbehavior. South Carolina Connections Academy will follow formal due process procedures to deal with the discipline of students in compliance with state and federal law.

2. Students with Disabilities

Include the school's policy on suspension and expulsion of students with disabilities.

Suspensions or expulsions for children designated as exceptional follow all appropriate state and federal policies, regulations, and laws. South Carolina Connections Academy will not discipline pupils protected under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. 794 (sec. 504), the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act, 20 U.S.C. 1400 et. seq. (IDEA), the American with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. 12101 et. seq. (ADA) unless South Carolina Connections Academy complies with the requirements of those acts.

3. Student Rights

Describe the school's appeals process for students recommended for expulsion, which must include a right to appeal a decision to the charter school's governing board.

The sample School Handbook (see Appendix N) describes the process for appeals for students recommended for expulsion, which includes the right to appeal to the Governing Board.

4. Parental Notification

Include the explanation of the student conduct, rights, and responsibilities policies that will be given to parents and to students at the beginning of the school year.

Upon enrollment, each student and his/her parent/legal guardian will be provided with the School Handbook (see sample in Appendix N), which details all policies regarding student conduct, rights, and responsibilities. The final Handbook will be maintained in the Virtual Library for ready access and updating (with Governing Board approval) throughout the year.

O. Indemnification

Include a statement assuming the liability for the activities of the charter school and an agreement to hold harmless the school district, its servants, agents, and employees from any and all liability, damage, expense, causes of action, suits, claims, or judgments arising from injury to persons or property or otherwise that arises out of the act, failure to act, or negligence of the charter school, its agents and employees, in connection with or arising out of the activity of the charter school.

South Carolina Connections Academy hereby indemnifies and holds harmless the South Carolina Public Charter School District and its servants, agents and employees from any and all liability for actions of the charter school.

South Carolina Connections Academy understands that it is responsible for its own operation, including preparation of a budget; that it is subject to auditing requirements under state law; and that it may contract for services and personnel matters, thus making it solely responsible for these actions. The South Carolina Connections Academy Governing Board may sue and be sued.

The South Carolina Public Charter School District is not liable for any acts or omissions of the charter school.

P. Insurance

Describe the types and amounts of insurance coverage to be obtained by the charter school.

South Carolina Connections Academy will have in place all of the following required insurances in the amounts detailed below, provided by a South Carolina licensed insurance company as noted.

1. Worker's Compensation Insurance

The application must include a description of worker's compensation insurance and amounts and a statement from a South Carolina licensed insurance company or the state insurance reserve fund setting out the charter school applicant's ability to secure the insurance and an estimate of the cost of the insurance.

South Carolina Connections Academy will obtain Worker's Compensation to the statutory limit of benefits in South Carolina, with an employer's liability of \$1,000,000. A statement of the applicant's ability to secure this insurance from a South Carolina licensed insurance company and an estimate of the annual premium cost are shown in Appendix O.

2. Liability Insurance

The application must include a description of liability insurance and the amounts to be obtained by the charter school and a statement from a South Carolina licensed insurance company or the state insurance reserve fund setting out the charter school applicant's ability to secure the insurance and an estimate of the cost of the insurance. The minimum policy must cover the limits of the South Carolina Tort Claims Act (S.C. Code Ann. § 15-78-120 (Supp. 2002)).

South Carolina Connections Academy will obtain Comprehensive General Liability Insurance with a limit of liability of \$1,000,000 per occurrence; \$2,000,000 in general aggregate coverage; and \$1,000,000 in employee benefits coverage. In addition, the school will obtain umbrella liability coverage with a \$10,000,000 limit of liability. A

statement of the applicant's ability to secure these policies and an estimate of the annual cost are shown in Appendix O.

3. Property Insurance

The application must include a description of the insurance to cover loss to the school building and contents for fire and theft and a statement from a South Carolina licensed insurance company or the state insurance reserve fund setting out the charter school applicant's ability to secure the insurance and an estimate of the cost of the insurance.

South Carolina Connections Academy will obtain required Property Insurance coverage of \$100,000. A statement of the applicant's ability to secure this insurance from a South Carolina licensed insurance company and the annual premium are shown in Appendix O.

4. Indemnity Insurance

The application must include a description of indemnity insurance against civil and criminal liability for the charter school to protect the sponsor, the members of the board of the sponsor, and the employees of a sponsor acting in their official capacity with respect to all activities related to the charter school. A statement from a South Carolina licensed insurance company or the state insurance reserve fund setting out the charter school applicant's ability to secure the insurance and an estimate of the cost of the insurance must also be included.

South Carolina Connections Academy will obtain required indemnity insurance consisting of Directors and Officers Insurance with a liability limit of \$1,000,000; Educators Legal Liability Insurance of \$1,000,000; and Employment Practices Liability insurance coverage of \$1,000,000. A statement of the applicant's ability to secure these insurance coverages from a South Carolina licensed insurance company and the combined annual premium are shown in Appendix O.

5. Automobile Insurance

The application must include a description of automobile insurance, both property and liability insurance, and a statement from a South Carolina licensed insurance

company or the state insurance reserve fund setting out the charter school applicant's ability to secure the insurance and an estimate of the cost of the insurance.

South Carolina Connections Academy will obtain required Automobile Insurance for hired and non-owned vehicles with coverage of \$1,000,000. A statement of the applicant's ability to secure this insurance from a South Carolina licensed insurance company and the annual premium are shown in Appendix O.

6. Other Insurance

Indicate whether the charter school will obtain any other type, or types, of insurance. For each additional type, include a description and estimated cost of coverage.

All insurance coverages are listed above.

Q. Statement of Assurances

This form must be signed by a duly authorized representative of the applicant group and submitted with the Charter School Application.

As the authorized representative of the applicant group, I hereby certify under the penalties of perjury that the information submitted in this application for **South Carolina Connections Academy** is true to the best of my knowledge and belief; and further I understand that, if awarded a charter, the school and its governing board:

- A. Will comply with all federal and state laws and constitutional provisions prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability, race, creed, color, gender, national origin, religion, ancestry, or need for special education services.
- B. Will not charge tuition or other charges of any kind except as may be allowed by the sponsor and is comparable to the charges of the local school district in which the charter school is located.
- C. Will adhere to the same health, safety, civil rights, and disability rights requirements as are applied to other public schools operating in the same school district or in the case of the SCPCSD, the local school district in which the charter school is located.
- D. Will meet, but may exceed, the same minimum student attendance requirements as are applied to public schools.
- E. Will adhere to the same financial audits, audit procedures, and audit requirements as are applied to public schools.
- F. Will report to its sponsor and the Department of Education documentation of the appropriate use of federal funds the Charter School may receive.
- G. Will use the same pupil accounting system as is required of all public schools and districts.
- H. Will employ noncertified teachers in a ratio of up to twenty-five percent of its entire teaching staff (ten percent for conversion schools). All teachers in the core academic areas will be highly qualified as defined in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.
- I. Will employ one administrative staff member who is certified or experienced in the field of school administration.
- J. Will be secular in its curriculum, programs, governance, and all other operations.
- K. Will comply with the Freedom of Information Act.
- L. Will comply with the No Child Left Behind legislation.

- M. Will adhere to all provisions of reporting student truancy, discipline incidents and persistently dangerous situations as required by No Child Left Behind.
- N. Will assume liability for the activities of the charter school and will indemnify and hold harmless the school district, its servant, agents, and employees, from any and all liability, damage, expense, causes of action, suits, claims, or judgments arising from injury to persons or property or otherwise which arises out of the act, failure to act, or negligence of the charter school, its agents and employees, in connection with or arising out of the activity of the charter school.
- O. Will report to its sponsor and the Department of Education any changes to information provided under its application in a timely manner.
- P. Will report at least annually to its sponsor and the Department of Education all information required by the sponsor and by the Department, including, at a minimum, the number of students enrolled in the charter school, the success of students in achieving the specific educational goals for which the charter school was established, and the identity and certification status of the teaching staff.
- Q. Will adhere to all provisions of federal law relating to students with disabilities, including Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 that are applicable.
- R. Will adhere to all provisions of federal law relating to students who are limited English proficient (LEP), including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974.
- S. Will comply with S.C. Code Ann. § 59-63-235 (2004), which provides for the expulsion of any student who brings a firearm to school.
- T. Will comply with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (20 U.S.C. § 1232).
- U. Will comply with any school district desegregation plan or order in effect.
- V. Will adhere to all requirements of the Office of School Facilities as detailed in the Charter School Facilities Approval Form.

Theresa Edwards

Name of Charter School Planning Committee Chair

October 10, 2007

Date



Signature of Charter School Planning Committee Chair

October 10, 2007

Date

Appendices

- A. Student Enrollment Projections Table
- B. ~~Draft Lottery Policy~~
- C. Charter Committee Resumes
- D. Documentation of Support
- E. Curriculum and Instructional Overview: Courses, Materials and Demonstrations (includes DVD)
- F. Documentation of Curriculum Alignment
- G. School Calendar
- H. Sample Draft Model IDEA Procedures
- I. Five-Year Budget
- J. Documentation from State Department of Education of Estimated Revenues
- K. Articles of Incorporation, Draft Bylaws, and Proof of South Carolina Non-Profit Corporation Status
- L. Sample Draft Professional Services Agreement
- M. Sample Draft Employee Handbook
- N. Sample Draft School Handbook
- O. Documentation of Insurability/Estimated Cost of Insurance
- P. Facility Prospects and Proposed Facilities Approval Plan