



Public Schools of North Carolina  
State Board of Education  
Department of Public Instruction

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# Report to the North Carolina General Assembly

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Virtual Public Charter School Pilot Program  
*SL 2014-100 (SB 744), Section 8.35(g)*

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**Date Due: January 16, 2017**  
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**Report to the JLEOC on  
Virtual Charter School Pilot Program  
January 17, 2017**

**Background**

North Carolina Session Law 2014-100 (SB 744, Budget Bill) provides for each of the following actions:

**State Board of Education shall report on the initial implementation of the pilot program to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee (JLEOC) by November 15, 2016, and on the findings from three years of operation of the pilot program by November 15, 2018.**

At a minimum the report shall include the following:

- (1) The number of students who have enrolled in courses offered by the schools.
- (2) The number and types of courses offered by the schools.
- (3) The withdrawal rate of students after enrollment.
- (4) Student performance and accountability data.
- (5) Information on implementation, administration, and funding for the pilot program.
- (6) Recommendations on the modification, continuation, and potential expansion of the program.

**Historical Context**

In 1996, North Carolina first authorized charter schools. This legislation imposed a statewide cap of 100 charters. In 2011, the General Assembly lifted the cap and directed the State Board of Education (SBE) to review and approve quality charters. In 2012, the SBE began working on a policy to address a new type of charter school that serves students via online programs. The SBE passed this policy on “virtual charter schools” in January 2013.

In August 2015, the two virtual charter schools opened after successfully completing the Ready to Open process. The two schools, NC Connections Academy (Connections) and NC Virtual Academy (NCVA). Session Law 2014-100 section 8.35(f) indicates the virtual charter schools are subject to presentation of data to the SBE. The SBE, in part of its oversight of the virtual pilot charter schools, required each school to provide implementation updates at several regularly scheduled meetings during the 2015-16 school year. During the 2016-17 school year,

the SBE will use the expertise of the Charter Schools Advisory Board (CSAB) and will require the virtual charter schools to provide updates for future recommendations throughout the remainder pilot.

As public school options increase, so do the challenges associated with understanding these options and ensuring high quality and accountability. Charter schools represent a growing alternative to traditional public schools, while still being public schools. Subsequently, as the charter school sector has grown, so has the body of research regarding charter school practices, performance, and accountability.

Charter schools are publicly funded and are typically operated under the auspices and oversight of an authorizer, which is often a school district but can be a State Education Authorizer (SEA), university, nonprofit agency, or other entity designated by law. Per General Statute 115C.218.5, North Carolina has a SEA which is the State Board of Education to authorize charters. Two options within the charter school sector include alternative education schools focusing on at-risk students, such as dropouts, and virtual schools that provide online instruction remotely via computer to a range of students, including those who have experienced success and failure in traditional settings.

Of more recent vintage are virtual schools, which have grown rapidly but still remain a small element of the overall charter school sector. Virtual schools have increased opportunities for individualized learning and broadened accessibility to a new range of instructional options. Schools that operate online pose a variety of complex challenges in the selection and teaching of curriculums, use and monitoring of technology, engagement of students and parents, and compliance with laws covering special student populations, such as students with disabilities. Even so, a 2015 national study by the Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) on virtual school performance showed, on average, that these schools lag far behind traditional public school counterparts. Questions also have been raised about the quality of oversight of some virtual schools and the manner in which they operate. Also a 2016 National Alliance for Public Charter Schools report indicates information on the breadth of underperformance by virtual charter schools and outlines the need for states to elevate the quality of virtual charter schools by outlining authorizing structures, enrollment criteria, enrollment levels, accountability for performance, funding levels based on costs, and performance-based funding. The report concludes with the recommendation that states with full time virtual charter schools may need to consider governing these schools outside of the state's charter law and simply as full-time virtual charter schools.

This legislative report outlines the progress of North Carolina's two (2) virtual charter schools (VCS), NC Connections Academy and NC Virtual Academy during the 2015 – 16 school year, which was each respective virtual charter school's first year of operation.

### **NC Virtual Charter School Legislation**

*Session Law 2014-100 sections 8.35.(a)* - Notwithstanding G.S. 115C-238.29D or any other provision of law to the contrary, the State Board of Education shall establish a pilot program to authorize the operation of two virtual charter schools serving students in kindergarten through twelfth grade.

The State Board shall establish an application process to allow student enrollment in the selected virtual charter schools beginning with the 2015 - 2016 school year. A virtual charter school participating in the pilot may serve any grade span of students in kindergarten through twelfth grade. The pilot program shall continue for a period of four school years and shall end with the 2018 - 2019 school year.

*Section 8.35.(b)* - The virtual charter schools participating in the pilot program authorized by this section shall be subject to the statutes and rules applicable to charter schools pursuant to Part 6A of Article 16 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes, except as follows:

- (1) The maximum student enrollment in any participating school shall be no greater than 1,500 in its first year of operation and may increase by twenty percent (20%) for each participating school up to a maximum student enrollment of 2,592 in the fourth year of the pilot. The State Board of Education may waive this maximum student enrollment threshold, beginning in the fourth year of the school's operation, if the State Board determines that doing so would be in the best interest of North Carolina students.
- (2) The maximum overall ratio of teachers to students for kindergarten through eighth grade shall be 1:50, and for ninth through twelfth grade shall be 1:150.
- (3) A student who regularly fails to participate in courses may be withdrawn from enrollment pursuant to procedures adopted by the virtual charter school. The procedures adopted by the virtual charter school shall ensure that (i) fair notice is provided to the parent and student and (ii) an opportunity is provided, prior to withdrawal of the student by the school, for the student and parent to demonstrate that failure to participate in courses is due to a lawful absence recognized under Part I of Article 26 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes and any applicable rules adopted by the State Board of Education.

*Section 8.35.(c)* - In addition to the operating requirements applicable to a virtual charter school participating in the pilot program pursuant to Part 6A of Article 16 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes, the following requirements shall apply to a participating virtual charter school:

- (1) The school shall maintain an administrative office within North Carolina. In addition, the school shall maintain at least one testing center or meeting place within each of the eight State Board of Education districts where the participating students reside, to allow educators and administrators from the school to meet students and parents.
- (2) If the school contracts with a third party for the provision of administrative staff, such staff fulfilling the equivalent positions of superintendent, principal, or business officer shall be residents of North Carolina.
- (3) All teaching staff shall carry the appropriate State certification to instruct any course and shall receive professional development in virtual instruction pursuant to the school's application to the State Board of Education to participate in the pilot program within 30 days of the employee's date of hire. At least ninety percent (90%) of the teaching staff shall reside within North Carolina.
- (4) The school shall have a withdrawal rate below twenty-five percent (25%). A student enrolled in a school with the intent expressed prior to enrollment of only being enrolled for

a finite period of time within the school year shall not be counted in the measured withdrawal rate. The school shall keep a written record of a student's stated intent for finite enrollment. A count of school attendance shall be taken at least once during each semester for funding purposes.

- (5) The school shall ensure that each student is assigned a learning coach. The learning coach shall provide (i) daily support and supervision of students, (ii) ensure student participation in online lessons, and (iii) coordinate teacher-led instructional sessions and State assessments.

*Section 8.35.(d)* - Notwithstanding G.S.115C-238.29B and G.S.115C-238.29D, a participating virtual charter school that is successful in meeting the requirements of this section and the applicable requirements of Part 6A of Article 16 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes during the period of the pilot program shall be eligible to be approved by the State Board of Education, at its discretion, without additional application requirements.

*Section 8.35.(e)* - The State Board of Education shall provide State funding to a virtual charter school participating in the pilot program as provided in G.S.115C-238.29H(a) and G.S.115C-238.29H(a1). The amount allocated pursuant to G.S.115C-238.29H(a)(1) shall not, however, include the allocation for low-wealth counties supplemental funding and the allocation for small county supplemental funding. Virtual charter schools participating in the pilot program shall also be subject to the requirements in G.S.115C-238.29H(b) through G.S.115C-238.29H(d). The amount of local funds provided to participating schools pursuant to G.S. 115C-238.29H(b) shall be the lesser of seven hundred ninety dollars (\$790.00) per pupil or the amount computed in accordance with G.S.115C-238.29H(b).

*Section 8.35.(f)* - A participating virtual charter school that does not comply with the provisions of this section may result in deferment or termination of enrollment expansion, or termination of a pilot. Schools are subject to presentation of data to the State Board of Education at the call of the Chair of the State Board with a minimum of 21 days' notice.

## **Report**

### **NC Virtual Public Charter School Student Enrollment and Withdrawals**

#### 2015-16 Enrollment and Withdrawal Summary

SL 2014-100 Section 8.35 outlines that the virtual public charter school shall have a withdrawal rate below twenty-five percent. Additionally, a student enrolled in a school ***with the intent expressed prior to enrollment of only being enrolled for a finite period of time*** within the school year shall not be counted in the measured withdrawal rate. The school shall keep a written record of a student's stated intent for finite enrollment. For the 2015-16 school year, Connections classified 20.7% (288) of its 1,995 initially enrolled students. Respectively, NCVA classified 12.5% (402) of its 1,870 initially enrolled students. Tables 1 and 2 provide a summary on each respective virtual public charter school's enrollment and withdrawal rates exclusive of months one (1) and five (5) which were not collected.

**Table 1. NC Connections Academy 2015-16 Enrollment and Withdrawal**

	<b>Month 1</b>	<b>Month 5</b>	<b>Month 9</b>
Membership Last Day	1,476	1,466	1,353
Enrollments Cumulative	1,644	1,967	1,995
Withdrawals Cumulative	168	501	642
Finite Enrollees			25
Withdrawal Rate all enrollees			32.2%
Withdrawal Rate without finite enrollees			31.3%

**Table 2. NC Virtual Academy 2015-16 Enrollment and Withdrawal**

	<b>Month 1</b>	<b>Month 5</b>	<b>Month 9</b>
Membership Last Day	1,402	1,389	1,283
Enrollments Cumulative	1,539	1,902	1,870
Withdrawals Cumulative	137	513	586
Finite Enrollees	48	152	158
Withdrawal Rate all enrollees			31.3%
Withdrawal Rate without finite enrollees			25.0%

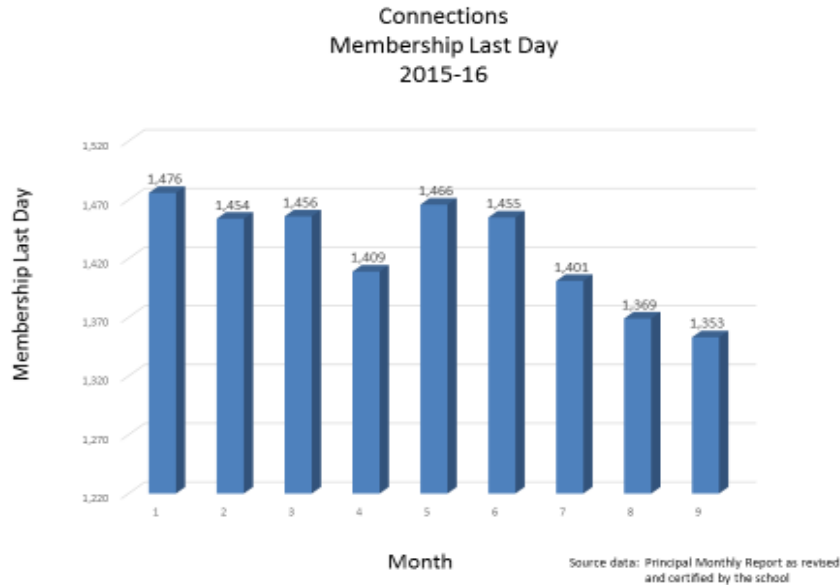
*Source: Principal Monthly Report as certified by the school and revised Finite Enrollees provide manually by school*

Parents with children enrolled in the VCS were surveyed to determine the length of time their child(ren) were enrolled for the 2015-16 school year. Survey responses suggest that approximately 80% of students attending the virtual charter schools attended the school for the entire school year. The remaining percentage attended the VCS less than 9 months due to returning to traditional schools, homeschooling, or other charter schools. Of the parents completing the survey who attended NC Connections Academy, 35% responded that the school inquired about finite enrollment. Respectively, 36% of NC Virtual Academy's parents indicated the school asked about finite enrollment at the time of enrollment. Another 29% between each school responded that this question was not applicable which could be due to the parent's understanding of the question or other reasons.

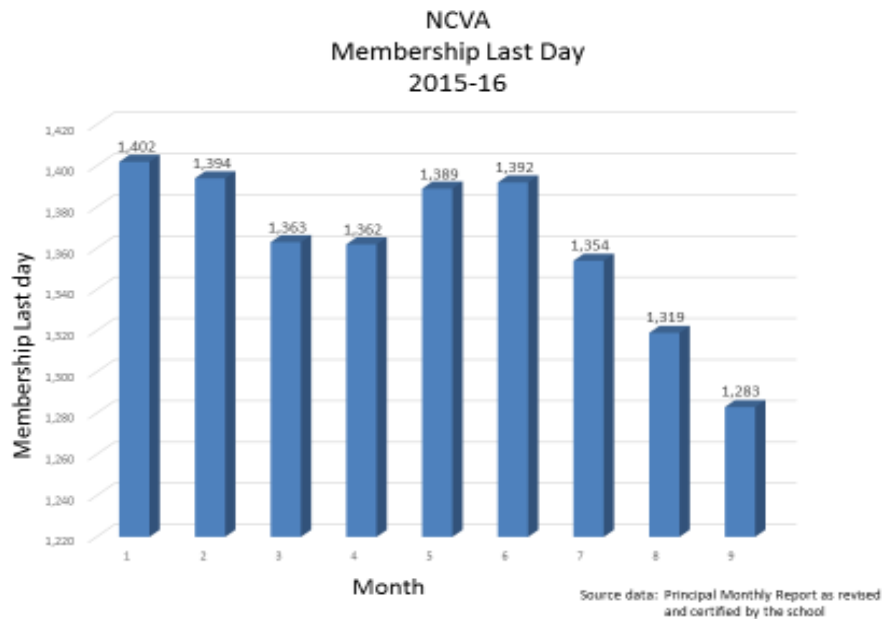
Figures A and B illustrates the trend in the number of students by month. Consistent for both VCS, 60% of the enrollments in a month were in membership for 165 days or more.



**Figure A. Connections Membership Last Day**



**Figure B. NVCA Membership Last Day**



Session Law 2016-94 made four (4) specific changes to the VCS withdrawal rate beginning with the 2016-17 school year which includes additional exclusions. The additional exclusions shall not be counted in measuring the VCS withdrawal rates:

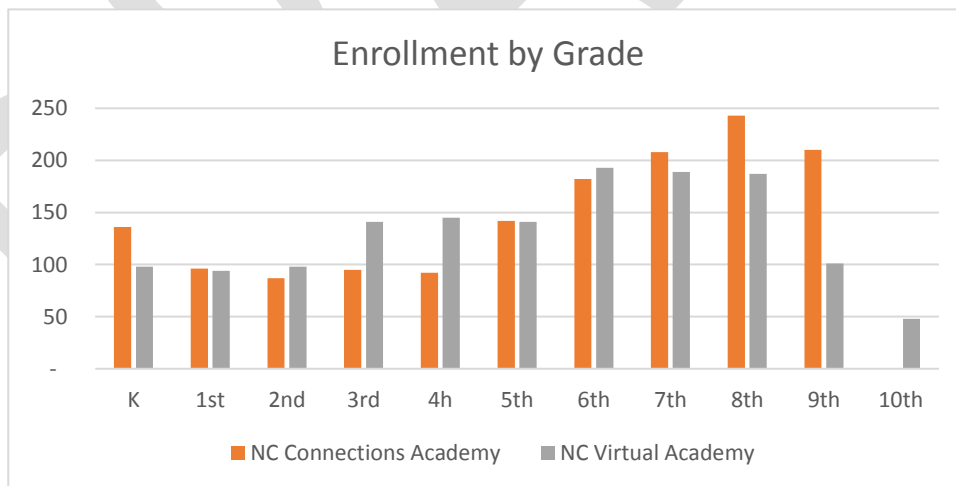
- (1) Students who regularly failed to participate in courses who are withdrawn under the procedures adopted by the school.

- (2) Students no longer qualified under State law to attend a North Carolina public school, including relocation to another state.
- (3) Students who: (i) withdraw from school because of a family, personal, or medical reason, and (ii) notify the school of the reason for withdrawal.
- (4) Students who withdraw from school within the first 30 days following the date of enrollment.

The majority of students attending the VCS during the 2015-16 school year previously attended a traditional public charter (50%). Comparatively, survey responses indicated another 29% were previously homeschooled, while 6% attended a brick and mortar charter school in North Carolina. Responses not included in this breakdown were those who attended private schools, schools outside of North Carolina, or those not attending a school in the prior year due to their age.

The largest percentage of students attending the VCS were enrolled in grades 5 – 9. Survey responses indicated that the largest amount of students, between both VCS, were enrolled in grades six (6) and eight (8). Comparatively, grades five (5), seven (7), and nine (9) were the second highest enrolled grades based on parent response. Overall, student enrollment in the VCS was significantly higher in the middle to high school grades versus the elementary grades (Figure C). Connections is approved to offer grades K – 12; however, enrolled students in grades K – 9 during its initial year. Comparatively, NCVA is also approved to offer grades K – 12 and enrolled students in grades K – 10.

**Figure C. Enrollment by Grade Level.**



Source: Principal's Monthly Report as Certified by the School Administrator

### NC Virtual Public Charter School Course Offerings

A variety of courses were offered and taught by teachers with varying experiences and education at each VCS for the 2015-16 school year at each grade level served. The course offerings captured from PowerSchool (Tables 1 and 2) include the elementary, middle, and high school course offerings for Connections and NCVA. Parents responding to the survey were primarily very satisfied (56%) or satisfied (35%) with the course offerings of the VCS. Only 8% of parents reported being dissatisfied, while another 2% reported being very dissatisfied.

**Table 1: NC Connections Course Offerings.**

<b>Elementary Courses (Grades K – 5)</b>	<b>Middle School Courses (Grades 6 – 8)</b>	<b>High School Courses (Grade 9)</b>
English Language Arts Math Social Studies Science Chinese Visual Arts General Music Physical Education Home Life Health and Physical Education (Grades 3 – 5) Ed Tech/Online Learning Home Life	English Language Arts Math Spanish Science Social Studies Biology Visual Arts Local Elective Business Keyboarding Visual Arts Health and Physical Education Introduction to Entrepreneurship	English I English I and II Honors Journalism I Spanish I and II AP English Language Composition Introductory Mathematics Math I, II, and III Math II and III Honors Pre-Calculus Honors and AP Calculus Biology and Biology Honors World History and World History Honors Psychology Music Visual Arts Health and Physical Education Preparation I Local Elective Exploring Career Decisions Digital Photography Educational Technology Speech Multi Media and Web Design Principles of Business and Finance Entrepreneurship I

**Table 2: NC Virtual Academy Course Offerings.**

<b>Elementary Courses (Grades K – 5)</b>	<b>Middle School Courses (Grades 6 – 8)</b>	<b>High School Courses (Grade 9)</b>
English Language Arts Math Social Studies Science General Music Physical Education Health and Physical Education Visual Arts	English Language Arts Math Social Studies Science Visual Arts Health and Physical Education Fundamentals of Music	English I English I and II Honors English Language and Composition AP Spanish I and II Spanish III and IV Honors French I and II French III and IV Honors Math I, II, and III Math II and III Honors Pre-Calculus Honors and Calculus AP Introduction to Mathematics Environmental Science AP Physical Science Physics AP United States History AP Art Appreciation Digital Photography Advanced Functions and Modeling American History: Founding Principles American History I and Honors Biology and Biology Honors Introduction to Computers Career Management Chemistry and Chemistry Honors Database Concepts Earth/Environmental Science Health Education Health and Physical Education JAVA Programming Latin I and II Fundamentals of Music Psychology World History OCS American History I and II OCS Applied Science OCS English I and II OCS Introduction to Mathematics I OCS NC Math I

## Virtual Charter School Teachers

Effective July 1, 2016, S.L. 2016-94 recodified the ninety-percent (90%) NC teacher residential requirement for the VCS to eighty percent (80%). However, guiding the VCS for the 2015-16 school year was S.L. 2014-100 section 8.35(c)(3) which stipulates in the virtual charter school, that all teaching staff shall carry the appropriate State certification to instruct any course and shall receive professional development in virtual instruction pursuant to the school's application to the State Board of Education to participate in the pilot program within 30 days of the employee's date of hire. Also, at least ninety percent (90%) of the teaching staff at the VCS shall reside within North Carolina.

In contrast, G.S. 115C.218.90 outlines employment requirements for teachers in charter schools. At least fifty-percent (50%) of teachers in brick and mortar charter schools must hold teacher licenses. Additionally, all teachers teaching in the core subject areas of mathematics, science, social studies, and language arts must be college graduates. Table 3 summarizes the percentage of licensed teachers in the VCS and brick and mortar charters.

**Table 3: Percent of Licensed Teachers.**

	<b>NC Connections Academy</b>	<b>NC Virtual Academy</b>	<b>All Charters</b>
<b>Percent of Teachers Licensed</b>	100	100	77.8

Note: As of May, 2016

Source: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

During the 2015-16 school year, the VCS hired no teacher assistants as every student in the VCS is assigned a learning coach per S.L. 2014-100 section 8.35(c)(5). The learning coach provides (i) daily support and supervision of students, (ii) ensures student participation in online lessons, and (iii) coordinates teacher-led instructional sessions and State assessments. Of the 750 parents who completed the survey, 94% or 710 respondents indicated they served as their child's learning coach. The remaining responses indicated that another relative or sibling was the child's learning coach. From the Connections' and NCVA's board and administrator perspectives the learning coaches were primarily parents. Each learning coach at Connections participated in orientation. Learning coaches of this VCS were provided strategies on helping students in the home environment. Comparatively, NCVA described the role of the learning coach as being able to support students in the on-boarding process, policy reading, attending virtual sessions, and supervising students. One board member of NCVA served as a learning coach during the 2015-16 school year.

Additionally, S.L. 2014-100 section 8.35(b) outlines a maximum overall ratio of teachers to students in the VCS. Specifically, for kindergarten through eighth grade the ratio is 1:50, and for ninth through twelfth grade the ratio is 1:150. In contrast, 13% of brick and mortar charter school staff and 12% of traditional public school staff are teacher assistants (Table 4). Brick and mortar charter schools are not required to maintain a specific teacher to student ratio and the ratios vary in these schools from 1:20 – 25 depending on the grade level, school, and its mission.

**Table 4: Staff Distribution.**

	<b>NC Connections Academy</b>	<b>NC Virtual Academy</b>	<b>All Charters</b>	<b>All Public</b>
<b>Teachers</b>	74.4%	70.2%	64.5%	54.5%
<b>Administrators</b>	11.6%	10.5%	6.9%	4.2%
<b>Professionals</b>	7.0%	15.8%	6.1%	8.8%
<b>Others</b>	7.0%	3.5%	22.5%	32.6%
<b>Total Staff</b>	43	57	7,620	173,362

Note: Professionals include Guidance, Psychological, Librarian/Audiovisual, and Consultant/Supervisor.

Others category includes Teacher Assistants, Technicians, Clerical/Secretarial, Service Workers, Skilled Crafts, and Unskilled Laborers.

Source: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

### **NC Virtual Public Charter School Student Performance and Accountability**

State Board policy GCS-C-021 provides procedures for the NC Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) for providing annual performance standards under the READY accountability model. In executing its duty under G.S. §115C-105.35, the State Board of Education (SBE) uses growth standards and performance standards to establish annual performance goals for all public schools, including charter schools. The accountability rules apply to all public schools involved in the state assessment program, including charter schools and regional schools. Section 26 of the Charter Agreement outlines the Nonprofit shall comply with all statutory and SBE requirements defining adequate performance criteria for Virtual Charter School performance and consequences for failing to meet statutory requirements.

During the 2015-16 school year each VCS enrolled students who were required to participate in the Ready accountability model. Connections is approved to offer grades K – 12; however, provided education to students in grades K – 9 during its initial year. Comparatively, NCVA is also approved to offer grades K – 12 and provided education to students in grades K – 10. Under the accountability model, students in grades 3 – 12 are required to take End-of-Grade (EOG) and End-of-Course (EOC) assessments depending on grade level and course enrollment.

During the March 3, 2016 SBE meeting, NCDPI Testing and Accountability provided its interim update on the VCS. At that time, each virtual charter school had:

- (1) Developed the required 2015-16 testing plan;
- (2) Established testing centers across the state;
- (3) Developed procedures to ensure test security;
- (4) Adhered to testing policies and procedures; and
- (5) Requested permission not to administer the English II exam online due to difficulties transporting laptop computers to test sites and corresponding associated costs.

Participation on required assessments is a vital part of the accountability system. All students must be included in the assessments. State and federal laws allows for a 95% minimum participation

rate by student groups before consequences for low participation are enforced. NC Connections met 15 of 27 (55.6%) participation targets and NCVA met 23 of 24 (95.8%) participation targets for required EOG and EOC assessments. These schools are required to provide information to parents noting how they will improve participation rates to meet all targets in the future.

For the 2015-16 school year, both VCS received an overall School Performance Grade (SPG) of D which translates numerically to a 52 for Connections and 45 for NCVA respectively (Table 1). Both VCS received a SPG of C in Reading and an F SPG in Mathematics. Comparatively, during the 2015-16 school year, traditional public schools had a lower percentage of schools with D and F (22.9%) than public charter school (27.7%). Charter schools overall had a higher percentage of A/A+N/G and B grades (39.9%) than traditional public schools. Finally, Connections and NCVA are categorized as low-performing and will submit a strategic plan to address their academic deficiencies. NCDPI District and School Transformation will provide feedback to each VCS on their strategic plan and the schools will be wrapped into the intensive monitoring and support available for all low performing schools in NC.

Though only counted as 20% of the overall SPG, the amount of growth a school’s students demonstrates for the year indicates the school’s success in moving student achievement forward, a key criterion for sustained improvement. Growth is determined on a scale of 50 – 100. Each VCS did not meet growth expectations and where at the lowest end of the growth spectrum. For 2015-16, 73.6% of all schools, public and charter, met or exceeded growth expectations.

**Table 1: School Performance Grade and Growth Status.**

	NC Connections Academy	NC Virtual Academy
<b>School Performance Grade</b>	51	46
<b>Reading SPG</b>	65	56
<b>Math SPG</b>	39	34
<b>EVAAS Score</b>	50.0	50.0
<b>Overall Achievement Score</b>	52	45

Table 2 captures each VCS performance on statewide assessments for the 2015-16 school year. Overall, Connections had a 42.3% College and Career Ready (CCR) percentage and a NCVA has 34.9% CCR for all the EOG assessments administered. Connections had a 52.6% GLP while NCVA produced a 44.4% GLP on all EOG assessments administered.

**Table 2: Percent College and Career Ready and Grade Level Proficient on End of Grade Tests.**

	NC Connections Academy		NC Virtual Academy	
	% CCR	% GLP	% CCR	% GLP
<b>All EOG Subjects</b>	42.3	52.6	34.9	44.4
<b>Reading Grades 3-8</b>	52.2	64.1	44.4	54.8
<b>Math Grades 3-8</b>	28.4	35.9	21.9	29.6
<b>Science Grades 5&amp;8</b>	52.8	66.7	45.5	57.6

Table 3 captures each VCS performance on statewide assessments End-of-Course assessments for the 2015-16 school year. Overall, Connections had a 37.2% College and Career Ready (CCR) percentage and a NCVA has 36% CCR for all the EOC assessments administered. Connections had a 47% GLP while NCVA produced a 45.7% GLP on all EOC assessments administered.

**Table 3: Percent College and Career Ready and Grade Level Proficient on End of Course Tests.**

	NC Connections Academy		NC Virtual Academy	
	% CCR	% GLP	% CCR	% GLP
<b>All EOC Subjects</b>	37.2	47.0	36.0	45.7
<b>Biology</b>	37.9	41.4	43.8	43.8
<b>English 2</b>	--	--	70.7	73.2
<b>Math 1</b>	34.7	49.2	17.6	34.1

S.L. 2014-100 denotes that each VCS school must maintain at least one testing center or meeting place within each of the eight State Board of Education districts where the participating students reside, to allow educators and administrators from the school to meet students and parents. Survey responses from parents suggests that 43% of parents agreed that the testing site was convenient for them, while 28% of respondents strongly agreed with the convenience of the testing site. For the 2015-16 school year Connections and NCVA complied with the testing site legislative requirement. Regional Accountability Coordinators (RACs) visited each of the testing sites to ensure that each location was appropriate for testing. Additionally, OCS monitored to ensure that each site was safe for students and collaborated with each VCS to certify that each site met mandatory health and safety requirements.

Session Law 2016-94 outlines the following changes to test administration in the virtual charter school to which the NC Department of Public Instruction Accountability Division has worked to adjust its polices to ensure compliance to the statue change:

- A participating virtual charter school may administer tests to multiple grade levels at the same time and in the same location.
- A participating virtual charter school may contract with a test administrator who is not employed by the board of directors of the school and meets the following criteria:
  - Holds a valid North Carolina teaching license.
  - Passes a criminal history check performed by the school.
  - Is trained to administer a test in accordance with the North Carolina Testing Program.

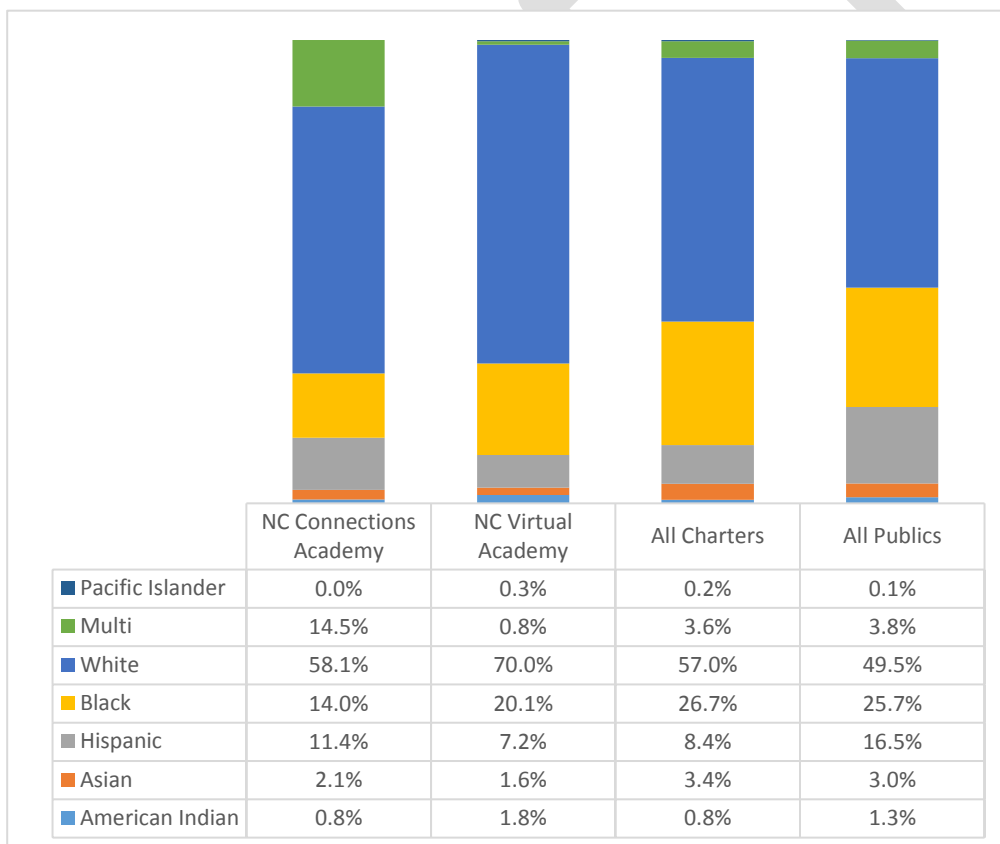
**NC Virtual Public Charter School Year One Implementation, Administration, and Funding**



## Virtual Charter School Student Demographics

Based on data from 2015-16, the overall student populations in the NC VCS, charter schools, and traditional public schools are similar in terms of racial and ethnic composition, though several differences do exist. NC Connections' has a Hispanic population of 11.4% compared to 16.5% in the traditional public schools. NCVA's Hispanic population of 7.2% was similar to the brick and mortar charter schools at 8.4%. Further, Connections' White population (70% of its population) was higher than its virtual counterpart, brick and mortar charters, and the traditional public schools. Comparatively, the brick and mortar charter schools and traditional public schools maintain a higher percentage of black students. Of the virtual charter schools, Connections' black population was 14% while all other schools represented in Figure A below was above 20%. Finally, NCVA had the lowest percentage of Asian students at 1.6% while Connections Asian population of 2.1% was similar to the brick and mortar charters and the traditional public schools.

**Figure A: Percentage Distribution of Race/Ethnicity.**



Note: All charters excludes the two virtual academies. All publics excludes all charters.

Source: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

While each of the VCS had some representation of various subgroups at their campuses, two (2) subgroups fully represented with available data were Students with Disabilities (SWD) and Economically Disadvantaged (ED). Students with Disabilities (SWD) Headcounts are conducted two (2) times per year, December and April. Based on the April 2016 headcount Connections had a 10.0% SWD population while NCVA had a 12.1% SWD population; NC as a whole has a SWD population of 12.5%. Neither Connections nor NCVA participates in the National Free and

Reduced Lunch Program (FRL); however, available data suggests that Connections' EDS population is approximately 48% and NCVA's is 46% respectively. Comparatively, NC's EDS population reflects approximately 50%.

2015-16 Funding Legislation

The State Board of Education shall provide State funding to a virtual charter school participating in the pilot program as provided in G.S. 115C-218.105(a)(1). The amount allocated pursuant to G.S. 115C-218.105(a)(1) shall not, however, include the allocation for low-wealth counties supplemental funding and the allocation for small county supplemental funding.

Legislation provides 3 differences in funding for the virtual charter schools and the traditional public schools and charter schools:

1. The State per pupil amount is calculated for each Local Education Agency (LEA) in the same way as traditional charters BUT excludes the per pupil share of low wealth and small county;
2. Traditional charters are funded based on month 1 Average Daily Membership (ADM), but virtual charter schools are funded based on the membership of students on the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the school and adjusted for the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester on the 100<sup>th</sup> day; and
3. Traditional charters receive a per pupil share of the local current expense of the LEA in which the student resides. For virtual charters this amount is capped at \$790. The amount of local funds provided to participating schools pursuant to G.S. 115C-238.29H(b) shall be the lesser of seven hundred ninety dollars (\$790.00) per pupil or the amount computed in accordance with G.S. 115C-238.29H(b).

*Dollars Per Student without Low Wealth and Small County*

Connections	NCVA
(\$114,672)	(\$159,571)
3%	3.5%

This chart below provides summary detail on the number of students funded for each virtual charter school based on a previously submitted PMR. Additionally, much like the brick and mortar charter schools, funding was distributed to each virtual charter school for the December and April 1 Exceptional Children (EC) headcounts.

## Funded Students

	Connections	NCVA
Month 1	1,488	1,433
Adjustment month 5	(23)	(21)
<b>Final Funded</b>	<b>1,465</b>	<b>1,412</b>
 Headcount of Exceptional Child	 90	 135

*Source data: Principal Monthly Report as certified by the school*

The NC Department of Public Instruction, Division of School Business received revised student count numbers with the submission of the final PMR from both NC Connections Academy and NC Virtual Academy reflecting the following final student counts:

	Connections	NCVA
Month 1	1,476	1,402
Month 5	1,466	1,389

*Source data: Principal Monthly Report as certified by the school*

### State Funding

Connections and NCVA received state funding sources from the LEA and an appropriated reserve. 56% of the funds were generated by reducing 108 LEAs for Kindergarteners going to the Virtual Charter School (VCS) that resided in those LEAs and for the students at the VCS who were previously in membership in the LEA. Comparatively, 44% were funded by an appropriated Reserve for non-public school students which were predominantly homeschool students. Funding amounts per student ranged from \$4,682 to \$6,415 during the 2015-16 school year. Additionally, the schools were provided EC funding, summer camp for their first, second, and third graders (other is fines and forfeitures, reading devices for student diagnostics, Indian gaming).

### State Funding

	Connections	NCVA
<b>Base allocation</b>		
Initial in Month 1	\$ 7,402,237	\$ 7,111,138
Adjustment for 2nd semester	(115,898)	(105,821)
<b>Final Funded State Base allocation</b>	<b>\$ 7,286,339</b>	<b>\$ 7,005,317</b>
 <b>Other State Funding</b>		
Funded State EC	\$ 340,881	\$ 507,433
Summer Camp	40,874	46,956
Other	23,196	30,414
<b>Total State Funding</b>	<b>\$ 7,691,290</b>	<b>\$ 7,590,120</b>

### Source of State Funding

Funding from reductions to LEAs	\$9,002,395
Funding from appropriated reserve	\$6,137,575
Other appropriation	<u>\$141,440</u>
Total funding	\$15,281,410

Source data: Division of School Business

Virtual Charter School Funding Comparison

Traditional charters are funded based on month 1 ADM, but virtual charter schools are funded based on the membership of students on the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the school and adjusted for the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester on the 100<sup>th</sup> day. Additionally, traditional charters receive a per pupil share of the local current expense of the LEA in which the student resides. For virtual charters this amount is capped at \$790. Detailed below is the impact of legislation and policy indicating:

- (1) The difference in the funds each VCS would have received if the per pupil calculation included low wealth and small county. It is important to note that these allotments are over \$250 million of the state budget.
- (2) The impact on the VCS by being funded on Membership Last Day (MLD) month 1 and 5 instead of month 1 ADM. For Connections there is a difference of 38 students and calculating on the average funded amount is \$189,000 and for NCVA the difference is 102 students and over half a million dollars.

*Membership Last Day vs Average Daily Membership*

Connections	NCVA
\$188,997	\$506,050
38 Students	102 students

Traditional charter schools and VCS are eligible to apply for federal grants. Information below shows the funds for Title I, and IDEA that they received. Included in the summary is the total of State and Federal funds for each VCS. In addition to these amounts, the schools received local funds at the local per pupil share or \$790 per student (whichever is lower) or possibly grants directly to them from other entities.

## Federal Funding

	Connections	NCVA
Title I	\$ 123,276	\$ 179,960
IDEA VI Handicapped	218,075	240,696
Improving Teacher Quality	35,814	41,252
IDEA VIB Targeted Assistance	900	900
<b>Total Federal Funding</b>	<b>\$ 378,065</b>	<b>\$ 462,808</b>
<b>Total State and Federal Funding</b>	<b>\$ 8,069,355</b>	<b>\$ 8,052,928</b>

### Recommendations on the Modification, Continuation, and Potential Expansion of the Virtual Public Charter School Program

During the 2015-16 school year, the SBE approved TCS-U-18. The policy was developed specifically for the Virtual Charter Schools to address the nuances of virtual education and to accommodate the requests of the VCS related to student attendance and membership. TCS-U-18 modified the SBE's policies related to attendance and membership in the Student and Accounting Manual for traditional and brick and mortar charter schools and was subsequently approved, February 5, 2015.

The VCS completed their implementation year during the 2015-16 school year. The pilot is scheduled to conclude in four (4) years. Over the next three (3) years, NCDPI, Office of Charter Schools, Charter Schools Advisory Board, and the State Board of Education plan to conduct additional surveys and collaborate with the virtual charter schools before arriving at additional recommendations on the modification, continuation, and potential expansion of the Virtual Public Charter School Program.

#### Virtual Charter School Stakeholder Perspectives

The Southeast Comprehensive Center (SECC) is funded by the U.S. Department of Education. The centers provide training and technical assistance to state education agencies (SEAs) to enable them to assist school districts and schools in the implementation and administration of programs authorized under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and the use of research-based information and strategies. SECC works closely with SEAs in Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina to support their efforts to implement, scale up, and sustain initiatives statewide and to lead and support their school districts and schools in improving student outcomes. The Southeast Comprehensive Center partnered with NCDPI to help collect information regarding the first year implementation of the VCS from parents, students, administrators, and board members.

In September 2016, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) and the Southeast Comprehensive Center (SECC) launched the North Carolina (NC) Virtual Public Charter School Parent and Student Year-End Surveys. These surveys were students who attended the two virtual public charter schools, NC Connections Academy and NC Virtual Academy, during the 2015-2016 school year and their parents. The student survey was designed for students

in grades four and up and all parents, regardless of their child's grade. The parent survey link was emailed to parents and the student link was included in the email message for parents to share with their student(s) who were in the appropriate grades. However, the response rate for students is more complicated to calculate because parents had to share link with their students, therefore, their response rate is contingent on how many parents allowed their students to complete the survey and how many students were in grades four and up. Given that these numbers are not known, a response rate for student participation was not calculated. Therefore, the parent and student survey results should be considered a snapshot of the perceptions and experiences of those involved in the NC virtual public charter schools.

Stakeholder perspectives on the virtual charter school pilot program were captured through survey from parents who enrolled a child in the VCS and students who were enrolled in the VCS during the 2015-16 school year, including finite enrollees. VCS student enrollment was verified by the PowerSchool database which captures student enrollment in NC public schools. Using the PowerSchool student membership information, NCDPI collaborated with each VCS to obtain parent email addresses for survey distribution. Additionally, interviews were conducted of each respective school's Lead Administrator and Board Members of the nonprofit holding the charter.

### Parent Survey Summarized Responses

While all parents who enrolled a child enrolled in a VCS during the 2015-16 school year received a survey, approximately 82% of the emails were valid resulting in 2,797 receiving a survey to complete. Of those parents where the survey delivered, approximately 27% or 761 parents responded to the survey request. The specific survey questions and responses for the parents are captured below and included multiple choice and limited open response choices.

Overall, children attending the virtual charter schools was split evenly between Connections and NCVA. 51% or 388 parents indicated they had a child(ren) attending Connections, while the remaining 41% or 369 responded their child(ren) attended NCVA during the 2015-16 school year. Approximately 90% of parents whose students completed a full year in virtual public charter school were satisfied or very satisfied with the amount of contact their child had with his/her teacher(s), while 74% of parents with withdrawn students expressed satisfaction about the amount of teacher contact. 26% of parents who withdrew their students were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the amount of contact their child had with his/her teacher(s).

In general, all parents were satisfied or very satisfied with the virtual public charter schools, with 92% of parents whose students completed a full year and 72% of parents with withdrawn students expressed overall school satisfaction.

## Parent Suggested Changes for the Virtual Charter Schools

The following results are from the open-ended question “What suggestions do you have for improving virtual public charter schools and online education?” 855 responses were coded into 14 themes. Table 1 displays the response rates and percentages by campus. Table 2 displays the themes and a sample of responses for each category.

**Table 1: Parent Response Rates by Campus.**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>Total %</b>	<b>NC Connections</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>NC Virtual Academy</b>	<b>%</b>
Academic support	22	2.57	6	1.30	16	4.08
Assessment	39	4.56	26	5.62	13	3.32
Assignments deadline/ More flexibility	128	14.97	51	11.02	77	19.64
Curriculum/Instruction guide	27	3.16	20	4.32	7	1.79
More electives/Honors courses	86	10.06	45	9.72	41	10.46
More face time with teachers	40	4.68	29	6.26	11	2.81
More field trips/Social events	119	13.92	65	14.04	54	13.78
More resources/ textbooks	37	4.33	26	5.62	11	2.81
School governance	31	3.63	15	3.24	16	4.08
School/Teacher communication	72	8.42	45	9.72	27	6.89
Technology issues	39	4.56	15	3.24	24	6.12
General comments	88	10.29	58	12.53	30	7.65
Negative experience	21	2.46	10	2.16	11	2.81
Positive experience	106	12.40	52	11.23	54	13.78
<b>Total</b>	<b>855</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>463</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>392</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 2: Coding Themes and Sample Quotes for Parents.**

<p>Academic support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “When a special needs child has been identified with the teacher and family, immediate action for the IEP should be done. I feel that we have been forgotten about with regard to an IEP that in turn has created attendance issues, daily lesson plan issues which has resulted in an overwhelming feeling of frustration and confusion.”</li> <li>• “My daughter was behind in math. There really was no plan in place to help her catch up but rather we still had to maintain the same school lessons.”</li> </ul>
<p>Assessment/ Assessment-related</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Test location should be close. Traveling from one city to another city far from home is not reasonable.”</li> <li>• “Get rid of the requirement for EOG's”</li> </ul>
<p>Assignments deadline/ More flexibility</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Live lessons were at inconvenient times. If you needed help with a lesson you had to watch an hour recording of a live lesson to get the 15 minutes of content that you needed on the lesson.”</li> <li>• “Increased flexibility. Inability to skip lessons causes difficulties and stress.”</li> <li>• “We were told at the start that live lessons were NOT mandatory then teachers started requiring students to be at them. Misleading.”</li> <li>• “Allowing the student to skip classroom sessions that were already completed in advance. Students lose interest if they are further ahead of other students but required to join them in online sessions.”</li> </ul>
<p>Curriculum/Instruction guide</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I would have preferred there be more diversity in the science curriculum.”</li> <li>• “The online curriculum is above NC state standards and more challenging than the standard public school; therefore, it requires an enormous amount of dedication to complete.”</li> </ul>
<p>More electives/Honors courses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Need to have AIG/Honors classes available.”</li> <li>• “More funding to help certain classes become available would be great.”</li> <li>• “I think that the online charter schools should partner with the local schools for things like band, choir, and sports..”</li> <li>• “Use NC Virtual Public School classes to expand online class offerings.”</li> </ul>
<p>More face time with teachers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I would suggest that the virtual online classroom be more like Skype, where the children can see the teacher in real time.”</li> <li>• “More opportunities for 1 on 1 contact with teachers or tutors.”</li> <li>• “More time to do lessons face to face with teacher and class.”</li> </ul>
<p>More field trips/Social events</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “More social activities for all areas of state.”</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The only improvement I would like to see would be more opportunities for children to interact with one another.”</li> </ul>
More resources/ textbooks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Sending more materials for kids to use when learning providing math textbooks to the families. While we found other courses were easy to work through using e-texts, math was a struggle due to having to go between several pages, including previous lessons and the answers in the back of the book. A physical text would have been much easier.”</li> <li>• I” do wish hard copy textbooks were available to rent for the year. I have gone online and bought some for my daughter. It's easier on the eyes and just easier in general to read from an actual book- no flipping back and forth between windows.”</li> </ul>
School governance/operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Administrators were MIA the whole school year. Almost no contact by principal throughout years. Like a shop without a captain.”</li> <li>• “Make sure there is adequate staffing of teachers per the number of students.”</li> </ul>
School/Teacher communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I had a difficult time getting in touch with school counselor before school started to discuss his schedule.”</li> <li>• “Give a time frame for the teachers to respond to students (questions we had went unanswered).”</li> </ul>
Technology issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The ability to use tablets and chrome. Those are two very popular things, and for a virtual academy to not have access with those is a little disappointing.”</li> <li>• “There were technical problems - but it wasn't a regular occurrence. Anything involving technology will have a glitch at some point.”</li> </ul>
General comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The teacher must be able to teach and children can be very rude, distracting, and disrespectful. Maybe parents can volunteer to be class monitor, but having a student do so is not helpful and may be harmful.”</li> <li>• “Allow more and get the word out many families do not understand this is available in our state. They also don't understand that it is tuition free.”</li> </ul>
Negative experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I felt like the material was too difficult with unrealistic goals... I have a first grader that is burned out on her studies, already, due to overbearing demands.”</li> <li>• “I suggest finding a model of online education that is not run by a business (K12, etc) but by truly qualified educators passionate about seeing our North Carolinian students succeed.”</li> </ul>
Positive experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I love the split year curriculum with plenty of time to complete a class and transition to the next class while retaining knowledge.”</li> <li>• “We love the virtual school environment. Coming off a year of traditional home school, we love having the support from</li> </ul>

	the teachers when needed and we liked that we didn't have to choose a curriculum.”
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Student Suggested Changes for the Virtual Charter Schools

The following results are from the open-ended question “What suggestions do you have for improving your virtual public charter school?” Table 3 displays the response rates and percentages by campus. Table 4 displays the themes and a sample of responses for each category.

**Table 3: Student Response Rates by Campus.**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>Total %</b>	<b>NC Connections</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>NC Virtual Academy</b>	<b>%</b>
Academic support	18	5.03	7	4.24	11	5.70
Assessment	17	4.75	10	6.06	7	3.63
Assignments deadline/ More flexibility	30	8.38	8	4.85	22	11.40
Class schedule/Courseload	28	7.82	7	4.24	21	10.88
More electives/Honors courses	42	11.73	19	11.52	23	11.92
More face time with teachers	23	6.42	13	7.88	10	5.18
More field trips/Social events	47	13.13	29	17.58	18	9.33
More resources/textbooks	16	4.47	8	4.85	8	4.15
School governance	34	9.50	12	7.27	22	11.40
School/Teacher communication	16	4.47	10	6.06	6	3.11
Technology issues	17	4.75	7	4.24	10	5.18
General comments	43	12.01	20	12.12	23	11.92
Positive experience	27	7.54	15	9.09	12	6.22
<b>Total</b>	<b>358</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 4: Coding Themes and Sample Quotes for Students.**

<b>Coding Theme and Sample Quotes</b>	
Academic support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Stay in contact with the students, and offer the services on their IEP. Mine was out of compliance the entire year!”</li> <li>• “When a student ask for help and obviously is falling behind but attending regularly with good communication; help the student to succeed. Don't just say "they'll catch up" and continue to bulldoze through the course with an obvious failure for the student in the end.”</li> </ul>
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Limit the time for the tests on line with the ability of pausing the test. So the kids know to finish the test in certain amount of time.”</li> <li>• “Make it so we could do EOGs at home.”</li> </ul>
Assignments deadline/ More flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “If the planner could be adjusted by teachers during semester to skip unnecessary material.”</li> <li>• “Class connects should be optional, not mandatory if student is passing the course and is not behind with assignments. Having all the required class connects doesn't give much flexibility and left little time to do the assignments.”</li> </ul>
Class schedule/Course load	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The virtual classes should end by the time traditional school classes end so that we can participate in fun activities, too.”</li> <li>• “I had to spend 5 hours in class connects and then complete my assignments. School was to be a 6 hour day however, for me the school day lasted 8-9 hours a day.”</li> </ul>
More electives/Honors courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Offer more classes, especially AP level classes.”</li> <li>• “More honors and AP courses Allowing students to take NCVPS courses that NCCA doesn't offer.”</li> </ul>
More face time with teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “More one on one conversations with the teachers.”</li> <li>• “I think a good way to improve the Online School is to have more times to meet my teachers in person.”</li> </ul>
More field trips/Social events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “More social events and field trips”</li> <li>• “I wish we had some kind of social media network system for classmates, like facebook for ncva, so we can make friends with our classmates easier.”</li> </ul>
More resources/ Textbooks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I need a book for all my core subjects.”</li> <li>• “My son is special needs not having books and hands on material was hard. I had to supplement all that.”</li> </ul>
School governance/ Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Better ways of tracking attendance.”</li> <li>• “Make sure all classes have teachers. One of the classes did not have a teacher for some time.”</li> </ul>
School/Teacher communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Make the teachers available to students when needed other than briefly through email.”</li> <li>• “More accessible to teachers and better explanations of grading.”</li> </ul>

Technology issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Try and make the online servers more stable. (less need for maintenance on school days and making sure all course materials are working at all times.)”</li> <li>• “Make the work more user friendly on an iPad”</li> </ul>
General comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “My biggest issue was that the teachers really didn't do anything. All of the work was put on the "coach". All of it.”</li> <li>• “Make sure everyone is on the computer because kids were just leaving the computer open and pretending they were on”</li> <li>• “You need to offer credits for afterschool activities as the local county school boards will not allow NCVA students to participate in their afterschool activities (this is unjust).”</li> <li>• “You need to have a lockdown on your teachers, my math teacher quit and it threw my entire semester off, as the new teacher wanted to 'pick up', but we weren't prepared because there were gap weeks w/no teacher just the book (bad).”</li> </ul>
Positive experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Our teacher was awesome. She would help us in any way possible. She was the greatest teacher. She made the kids feel loved and that they could achieve anything that wanted to.”</li> <li>• “I love NCVA and I am thankful for it!!!”</li> <li>• “I think they are great! Wonderful courses and very advanced.”</li> <li>• “I liked everything about virtual school!”</li> </ul>

### NC Connections’ 2016-17 Proposed Changes

The following results are from the open-ended question when interviewing the Board of Directors and the Administrator of NC Connections, “What changes, if any do you expect to occur in enrollment, staffing, or course offerings in your virtual school?”

- Our school will be adding a grade level and plan to do common based assessments around curriculum and EOG testing. We plan to provide more information to parents around the importance of EOG tests and more RTI procedures to heighten interventions for all students.
- We had 300 students impacted by hurricane Matthew and are watching these families closely as this impacted learning due to loss of power. We are trying to give support as much as possible and will watch as families come back on line.
- We will have clear expectations with EMO in year 2 and have identified that math was an issue. Connections is reallocating resources from payments that the board held until they saw the interventions that would be put in place. We had a 1 year contract (typically contracts are for 4 years). We expect changes to math instruction- lower class size, provide an actual calculator for the math test (not computer calculator that they hadn’t been exposed to), and a deeper level of questions that are more aligned to assessment.

- We had monthly meetings with the EMO and had several work sessions in between to determine what the board will focus on financially. Connections understands the seriousness of improving the school letter grade next year and the year to follow. The board is holding the EMO accountable.
- Without the EMO, the school doesn't have a district like structure, so the board needs to consider options- possibly changing the role of the EMO, considering bringing academic structure in house- like Chief Academic Office, etc.

#### NC Virtual Academy's 2016-17 Proposed Changes

The following results are from the open-ended question when interviewing the Board of Directors and the Administrator of NC Virtual Academy, "What changes, if any do you expect to occur in enrollment, staffing, or course offerings in your virtual school?"

- One main expectation is that the majority of returning families will be familiar with the virtual school environment. Students and parents will know what the main procedures are and how to connect and maneuver through the virtual classroom settings.
- The board members expressed satisfaction that they had worked out the basic technical issues with the virtual environment and there is an expectation that the new school year will operate much smoother.
- Board members noted that now that they had completed one year successfully and addressed the first year problems, they would be able to direct their energy on smaller details of operating a virtual school.
- There is an expectation that the enrollment and the staffing will increase. The school has hired new subject area coaches to provide more academic support for students who need help. The school will also be adding another grade level (11<sup>th</sup> grade) and increasing new courses, based on teacher availability.
- Board members shared that the number of courses offered in the virtual school is directly impacted by the availability of NC teachers. According to board members, the virtual schools cannot employ teachers from other states and that limits the kinds of courses that can be offered to students, especially in the area of foreign language.

## **Explanation of Terms**

*Membership Last Day* - A school's head count detailing the number of students in membership on the last day of each month

*Cumulative Enrollments* - A running total of the number of students entering the school

*Cumulative Withdrawals* – The running total of the number of students leaving the school

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