



January 2012 Update

## **New State Law Gives More Oregon Families Opportunity for Virtual Schooling**

- **2011 Oregon Legislature changed state law regarding enrollment in statewide virtual public charter schools such as Oregon Connections Academy.** Now, up to 3% of a school district's total students can attend one of these schools without having to get permission from their local school district. A 2009 law capped enrollment at the level each statewide virtual school had in May of that year. Oregon Connections Academy was limited to just under 2600 students.

**Enrollment for the 2011-2012 school year at Oregon Connections Academy is now around 3,000 students compared to this time last year when enrollment hovered around 2,500 students.**

- **What is Oregon Connections Academy?** It is a tuition-free public school operating under a charter with the Scio School District serving students in grades kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade in every corner of the state who, for whatever reason, did not find the traditional brick-and-mortar schools to be a good fit for them.

Students attending Oregon Connections Academy receive a top-notch public education online from the comfort of home. Unlike homeschooling, Oregon Connections Academy is public education delivered to a student's home.

Oregon Connections Academy combines Oregon-certified teachers, a standards-aligned curriculum, unique technology tools, an extensive selection of electives and clubs, and community experiences to create an individualized alternative to the bricks-and-mortar classroom. All Oregon Connections Academy students participate in the nationally accredited Connections Academy program that combines high quality resources from leading publishers with cutting-edge, yet easy-to-use, technology and hands-on materials. Learning from home, students will work closely with a parent, or another "Learning Coach" and a licensed Oregon teacher using detailed daily lesson plans that can be personalized to meet individual student needs.

For more information check out the Oregon Connections Academy website <http://www.connectionsacademy.com/oregon-school/home.aspx>

- **Separating fact from fiction in deciding whether online education is right for your student.** While each family has its own reasons for choosing full-time virtual schools, the most common driver is the ability for a student to work at his own pace and level, regardless of what other students are doing.

**Fact: Virtual public school is not home school**

The two are very different. Virtual public schools deliver public education in the comfort of the student's home. Like all public schools, they are tuition-free to students. [State-certified teachers](#) deliver a rigorous [curriculum that correlates to state standards](#). Schools provide students with a variety of curriculum materials and learning resources – sometimes even computers. Virtual private schools are also available.

**Fact: Not all virtual schools are created equal**

Parents need to do their homework to pick a high quality virtual school that's the best fit for their child. Look for a school with a track record of delivering student academic achievement and [high levels of parent and student satisfaction](#). Other key quality benchmarks include: national accreditation; full-time, certified and highly qualified teachers; [state-of-the-art technology resources](#); and [community activities like clubs](#) and [field trips for students](#).

**Fact: Certified teachers do the teaching**

At Oregon Connections Academy, students learn at home under the guidance of a certified teacher. Assisting the student in day-to-day activities is an adult Learning Coach, who is typically a parent, but also could be another family member or responsible adult caregiver. The teacher works directly with both the student and Learning Coach to develop an individual learning plan, provide instruction and evaluate assignments.

**Fact: Students use textbooks, pencils, microscopes and interactive curricula**

In virtual schools, the computer is a tool for teachers and parents to manage and track assignments communicate (along with the phone) and deliver interactive curricular materials. However, students complete many assignments “unplugged,” and spend time reading textbooks, using workbooks, reading library books and doing hands-on experiments – just like a traditional school.

**Fact: Students regularly socialize and interact with peers**

Virtual students have opportunities to interact with each other. Just like all kids, they choose to IM, text, or talk to each other on the phone. Oregon Connections Academy sets up a number of field trips each month so students can get together as a group. Many of the students also find that the flexibility of virtual education makes it possible to be involved in activities, such as sports and volunteering.

To learn more about Oregon Connections Academy go to [www.ConnectionsAcademy.com](http://www.ConnectionsAcademy.com)

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