CYBER CHARTER SCHOOL
CHARTER RENEWAL APPLICATION

Submitted to
Pennsylvania Department of Education
Charter School Office
333 Market Street, 5th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17126

October 1, 2010

Dr. Dennis Tulli, CEO
Commonwealth Connections Academy Charter School
4050 Crums Mill Rd., Suite 303
Harrisburg, PA 17112
717-651-7200
September 30, 2010

Department of Education
Charter School Office
333 Market Street, 5th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17126

Dear Charter School Office:

Attached please find the 2010 Cyber Charter Renewal Application for Commonwealth Connections Academy.

As you know, Commonwealth Connections Academy was originally chartered in 2003 as the first school approved under the Cyber Charter Law of 2002, and was renewed in 2006 for five-year term. The attached Renewal Application requests a second five-year renewal to take effect when the current charter expires in June 2011.

Commonwealth Connections Academy has experienced significant success during the current charter term. We added grades 10-12, implemented a variety of new programs such as after-school tutoring and our mobile classroom, established satellite teaching centers in each region of the state, and more than doubled our student enrollment. Throughout the charter term we have attracted and retained an excellent, highly qualified teaching staff and maintained stellar parent satisfaction ratings, reaching a high of nearly 94% in 2010.

Our school’s academic performance has also been strong. Commonwealth Connections Academy made AYP in 2007-08 and met nearly 90% of the required AYP indicators in 2008-09 and 2009-10. As detailed in the attached application, we are implementing multiple intervention strategies focusing on the identified areas of need – including PSSA performance by students in the IEP sub-category – with an eye to making AYP again in 2010-2011.

The attached Renewal Application proposes continued enrollment growth, enhanced regional reach through additional satellite facilities and Community Coordinators, and a laser-like focus on academic achievement for all of our students. While the Commonwealth Connections Academy Board of Trustees has directed staff to begin exploring the possibility of adding pre-kindergarten grades midway through the next charter term, our highest priority will continue to be providing a top-quality cyber charter option for students in grades K-12 throughout Pennsylvania.

Commonwealth Connections Academy looks forward to working with the Charter School Office throughout the renewal process.

Sincerely,

Dr. Dennis J. Tulli
CEO
dtulli@connectionsacademy.com
717-651-7200 ext. 318
Application Fact Sheet

This Application Fact Sheet is intended for administrative processing of the Cyber Charter Renewal Application. The information furnished below must be an accurate representation of the complete Renewal Application.

Cyber Charter School Name

Commonwealth Connections Academy Charter School

School Address  Administrative Office: 4050 Crums Mill Rd., Suite 303, Harrisburg, PA 17112

(Additional non-administrative facilities in Philadelphia, Lehighton, Pittsburgh, and Williamsport)

(If more than one facility, the cyber charter school must identify the administrative office where all student records are maintained pursuant to section 1748-A (h).)

County  Dauphin County

Intermediate Unit  CALU #15

Charter Start Date  July 1, 2003  Date Current Charter Expires  June 30, 2011

Federal Employer Identification Number  74-3068619  AUN # 68-0519943

Vendor Identification Number  189720

CEO: First  Dennis  Middle  J  Last  Tulli

Address  4050 Crums Mill Rd., Harrisburg  State PA  Zip Code  17112

Telephone  717-651-7200 ext. 318  Fax Number  717-651-0670  E-mail  dtulli@connectionsacademy.com

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades Served by Cyber Charter School</th>
<th>Current &amp; Projected 5 year Student Enrollment:</th>
<th>Current &amp; Projected 5 year Teaching Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middle  6-8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary  9-12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Circle Appropriate Grade(s)  K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Is increase due to addition of grade levels?  Yes  No  X

Does the cyber charter school have an existing retirement system?  Yes  X  No
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Note: Numbering of sections mirrors Pennsylvania Department of Education 2010 Cyber Charter Renewal Application form, which does not include a section IV.
I. Student Achievement

A. Progress towards Initial Goals and Objectives:

- Describe how the Cyber Charter School has met or made reasonable progress toward initially established goals defined in the current charter application. If goals were revised, discuss why and how the new goals provide a better fit with the overall mission of the Cyber Charter School. Provide a concise explanation and use data whenever possible.

Commonwealth Connections Academy’s original charter application (approved in 2003) and first renewal application (approved in 2006) included the same consistent goals, shown in the table below. These overarching goals have served as an umbrella for more granular annual goals as developed each year by the Board of Trustees for purposes of school staff evaluation and tracked in the school’s Annual Report.

While the charter goals have remained constant, the school’s ability to gather and use data to track its progress against these goals has become ever more sophisticated. The chart below discusses each goal, Commonwealth Connections Academy’s progress toward it, and how it has evolved based on the availability of more robust and granular data systems.

During this same time period, the school’s enrollment has more than doubled. In most grades in each of these years, more Commonwealth Connections Academy students were new to the school than returning (please see Section III/B for details). While the school’s curriculum and instructional approach has been shown to produce significant academic improvements for students who stay with the school for more than one year (see graphs following the table), the challenge of effecting this impact with so many new students can be seen in the school’s progress toward its academic goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal from Original Charter</th>
<th>Status/Progress</th>
<th>Revisions for 2011-16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal I: Mastery of Learning Objectives.</strong> Students will master a set of learning objectives in the core subject areas outlined for each grade level and aligned with Pennsylvania Academic Standards. <strong>Measurement:</strong> Mastery will be determined by regular online and offline assessments covering a subset of the learning objectives as well as an evaluation of work products in each student’s portfolio. <strong>Performance Criteria:</strong> Students will be expected to make adequate yearly progress as defined by</td>
<td>Commonwealth Connections Academy has made reasonable progress toward this goal:  - Approached AYP in 2006-07  - Made AYP in 2007-08  - Met 26 out of 29 AYP indicators in 2008-09  - Met 22 out of 25 AYP indicators in 2009-10</td>
<td>AYP is an appropriate measure for the school but not for students; also, this goal does not currently benchmark PSSA scores against the state as a whole. REVISED goals and objectives for upcoming charter term will separately address AYP and comparative PSSA scores (see Section V, Plans for the Future)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pennsylvania’s No Child Left Behind plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>2009-10 Annual Goal:</strong> Ensure Student Participation in State Assessments. At least 95% of eligible students will participate in required state-wide assessments.</th>
<th>Commonwealth Connections Academy met this goal, achieving at least 95% PSSA participation every year.</th>
<th>No revision – 95%+ test participation remains a baseline priority.</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2009-10 Annual Goal:</strong> Improve Student Academic Achievement in Mathematics. At least 56% of all students will be proficient in Mathematics, as measured by the annual state-wide PSSA assessments.</td>
<td>Commonwealth Connections Academy made substantial progress toward this goal: In 2009-10, 53% of Commonwealth Connections Academy students scored Proficient or Advanced on the Math PSSAs (up from 43% in 2005-06, but flat from 2008-09)</td>
<td>Specific PSSA score objectives will be addressed in separate goal for next charter term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2009-10 Annual Goal:</strong> Improve Student Academic Achievement in Reading. At least 63% of all students will be proficient in Reading, as measured by the annual state-wide PSSA assessments.</td>
<td>Commonwealth Connections Academy made substantial progress toward this goal: In 2009-10, 60% of Commonwealth Connections Academy students scored Proficient or Advanced on the Math PSSAs (up from 52% in 2005-06, but flat from 2008-09)</td>
<td>Specific PSSA score objectives will be addressed in separate goal for next charter term</td>
</tr>
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**Goal II: Student Progress.** Based on a value-added model of academic growth, each student will demonstrate a year of academic growth for a year in school. **Measurement:** Commonwealth Connections Academy will use a technology-based standardized pre- and post-test commercially prepared to gauge yearly progress. This test Commonwealth Connections Academy made substantial progress toward this goal, using the Longitudinal Evaluation of Academic Progress (LEAP), a proprietary, standards-focused pre- and post-test in Math and Reading. The LEAP expresses achievement of In-year academic growth measured by a pre- and post-test remains a critical school goal.
will be administered at the beginning and end of the year. **Performance Criteria:** 90% of students across each demographic subcategory will demonstrate a year of academic growth on an annual basis.

annual academic growth as "satisfactory progress," defined as at least a 10% gain from pre-test to post-test OR a post-test score of at least 75%.

In 2006-07, 88% of Commonwealth Connections Academy students made satisfactory progress in Reading, and 87% did so in Math.

In 2007-08, 95% made satisfactory progress in Reading, and 86% did so in Math.

In 2008-09, 95% made satisfactory progress in Reading, and 85% did so in Math.

In 2009-10, 91% made satisfactory progress in Reading, and 81% did so in Math.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal III: Personalized Learning:</th>
<th>Every Commonwealth Connections Academy student has a Personalized Learning Plan. The metric for tracking grade level improvement is the LEAP pre- and post-test, results of which are described above.</th>
<th>This goal is now redundant since Goal II addresses academic growth. It will be replaced by a goal focusing on comparative PSSA scores.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personalized Learning Plans</strong> will drive instruction. <strong>Measurement:</strong> Each individual student will have a profile of academic strengths and weaknesses at the beginning of the school year. Internal assessments (formal and informal) will track progress on addressing individual areas of weakness. <strong>Performance Criteria:</strong> 90% of students will average one grade level improvement across all identified areas.</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly academic growth as “satisfactory progress,” defined as at least a 10% gain from pre-test to post-test OR a post-test score of at least 75%.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NON-ACADEMIC GOALS</td>
<td>Status/Progress</td>
<td>Revisions for 2011-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal I: Parental Involvement.</strong></td>
<td>Commonwealth Connections Academy has met this goal each year.</td>
<td>The annual Parent Satisfaction Survey, administered by an independent market research organization, now provides a more robust and granular measure of parent engagement with the school. A goal focusing on Parent Satisfaction using this annual survey data is proposed to replace this goal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents (and learning coaches if they designate) will work with teachers as true partners in the planning and delivery of their child’s instructional program. <strong>Measurement:</strong> This objective will be evaluated with data from the Commonwealth Connections Academy Learning Management System. <strong>Performance Criteria:</strong> Formal parent/teacher communication will occur at least once every two weeks and parents will proactively identify and work with teachers to address student challenges.</td>
<td>Contact and communication metrics are tracked carefully through the LMS and are integrated into ongoing teacher evaluation.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Goal II: Attendance.</strong></td>
<td>Commonwealth Connections Academy has met this goal each year.</td>
<td>Attendance is now an essential component of AYP, with 95% attendance required for achieving AYP. This goal is proposed to be integrated into detailed AYP targets under Academic Goals for future years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commonwealth Connections Academy students will maintain high attendance. <strong>Measurement:</strong> Commonwealth Connections Academy uses multiple methods for tracking attendance as described in Child Accounting section. <strong>Performance Criteria:</strong> Attendance will average 95% over the school year.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal III: High-Quality Teaching.</strong></td>
<td>Commonwealth Connections Academy has met or exceeded this goal each year.</td>
<td>The teacher quality goal is proposed to shift away from retention and evaluation (ratings) as separate measures toward an integrated focus on retaining the highest-rated teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commonwealth Connections Academy will provide its students with excellent teaching. <strong>Measurement:</strong> Teacher recruitment, retention, and performance on staff evaluations. <strong>Performance Criteria:</strong> Teacher attrition will be less than 6% and the average teacher rating will be 3 or better on a 5-point scale.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal IV: School Community.</strong></td>
<td>Commonwealth Connections Academy has met this goal each</td>
<td>This goal is proposed to be integrated into the overall Parent Satisfaction goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commonwealth Connections Academy will create a sense of community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
community within the virtual school environment. **Measurement:** The degree of participation in collaborative projects and the use of other Commonwealth Connections Academy community-building tools such as bulletin boards will be regularly reviewed. **Performance Criteria:** Students will report an equal or better attitude toward school than their peers in traditional schools. Each student will have the opportunity to participate in regular group activities.

Data about school field trips and other activities are reported monthly to the Board of Trustees, while overall satisfaction is tracked through the annual Satisfaction Survey (which also measures participation in and satisfaction with school events and activities).

- Provide any other relevant information about progress toward academic goals. If reference has been made to test scores or other testing outcomes, include the name of the test and the dates administered. Include a rationale for using that particular test.

Commonwealth Connections Academy’s progress toward AYP and its PSSA-related goals has been impacted by the school’s dramatic growth, which has resulted in many more new students each year than returning students, and therefore comparatively few students who have benefited from multiple years with this curriculum and instructional model. For example, of the approximately 980 Commonwealth Connections Academy students in grades 3-8 who took the Math and Reading PSSAs in 2009-10, just 30% were at Commonwealth Connections Academy for their second year, and only 14% had been at the school for three years. The impact of longevity on PSSA scores is significant, as shown in the graphs below. It is worth noting that among students with two or more prior years at Commonwealth Connections Academy, the percentage scoring proficient or above exceeded the school’s 2009-10 goal of 56% in Math and 63% in Reading.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prior Years at CCA in 2009-10</th>
<th>Math PSSA 2010 - Grades 3-8, % Proficient and Above</th>
<th>Reading PSSA 2010 - Grades 3-8, % Proficient and Above</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Commonwealth Connections Academy Cyber Charter Renewal
Has the Cyber Charter School made Adequate Yearly Progress (“AYP”) for each of the last five years? If not, discuss why and what steps are in place to remedy the situation. Reference information from the Cyber Charter School’s School Improvement Plan where applicable.

Commonwealth Connections Academy made AYP for the first time in 2007-08. In 2008-09, the school met 26 out of 29 AYP indicators, missing the mark with two subgroups on PSSA scores. In 2009-10, Commonwealth Connections Academy met 22 out of 25 AYP indicators, falling short on Math performance for African-American students (who experienced a 2.1% erosion in scores), in Math for students with IEPs (a 4.2% drop in scores) and in Reading for students with IEPs (based on 0% change from previous year).

Commonwealth Connections Academy has put in place a very robust plan of action to address these small but critical shortfalls in test performance. (Detailed School Improvement Plans as submitted to the Department are shown in Attachment E.)

Key strategies, which are already well into implementation, include:

- The Mobile Classroom, our new a full-sized, 38-foot vehicle equipped with a satellite Internet capability, wireless Internet access, computers, digital media, interactive smartboards, microscopes, and all the equipment needed to conduct complete science labs, reading lessons and many other classroom activities. The Mobile Classroom will also provide extra opportunities for teachers to interact with students one-on-one or in small groups, and for students to participate in academic challenges, labs, and interactions.

- An After-School program, providing online tutoring for all students in grades K-12 Monday through Friday from 4:30 to 8. Teachers will be available to provide one-on-one and small group sessions to support students in reaching mastery.

- Scientific Learning’s Fast ForWord, a web-based brain training program that develops a strong foundation of cognitive and reading skills for a lifetime of successful learning.

- HotMath, a web-based high school tutorial program delivering step by step answers to math homework problems anytime they are needed, day or night.

- Math 24, an interactive website used to increase student performance in Math skills using games and skills activities.

- Skills Tutor, a technology-based, online program aimed at building basic skills in order to improve performance in Math and Language Arts.

- Study Island, an interactive web-site directly linked to Pennsylvania State Standards used to improve performance for all students.
• Describe the strategies that are in place to ensure that students with special needs, those at risk of failure, and those not making reasonable progress are meeting – or are being given the opportunities and reasonable accommodations to meet – the academic goals. Provide clear evidence and use data to document how those strategies are proving effective for students in terms of improved academic performance.

Commonwealth Connections Academy has in place multiple strategies to optimize performance for students with special needs, those who are at risk of failure, and others identified as not making reasonable progress.

• **The Student Study Team (SST)** is the school’s cross-functional team that comes together at least weekly to plan strategies for isolating specific skill areas and providing one-on-one assistance to students as needed, including Response to Intervention strategies.

• **The Facilitating Online Curriculum Using Standards (FOCUS)** program provides small group tutorials for students scoring at-risk on local assessments and/or the Terra Nova in Language Arts and/or Math.

• **The Program for All Students to Excel (PACE)** provides individualized synchronous LiveLesson sessions with lessons and practice to students performing below proficient on state testing directly related to state standards and areas of weakness as seen on PSSA results. Students are provided weekly pre- and post-tests to assess mastery of each skill presented.

• **The Multi-Tiered Intervention** model ensures that every Commonwealth Connections Academy student has access to the resources he or she needs to be successful: Tier 1 – Core Instructional Program; Tier 2 – Supplemental Programs and Supports; Tier 3 – Alternative Programs. The school’s Student Study Team meets on a weekly basis to discuss students who are struggling academically and to develop an intervention plan and strategies for improvement.

• **The SSTAIR** initiative aims to more deeply link curriculum, standards and assessments for interventions that have a direct impact on student mastery of anchor objectives and resulting standardized test performance. The SSTAIR program targets Essential Skills/Standards by subject/grade level, uses specified Assessments within the curriculum to measure student mastery of these skills and standards, provides tiered Interventions for non-mastered skills and standards, and then tracks students’ Response to the implemented interventions by skill/standard.

• Using the chart on the following page, report the school’s PSSA scores for each of the preceding years. Report out for subgroups, including, at a minimum, students with IEPs, students who are limited English proficient (LEP), race/ethnicity, and economically disadvantaged. Explain how the scores correspond to the goals identified in the current charter. Discuss how the scores correspond to AYP as established in the Pennsylvania Accountability System.

Please see the charts in Attachment A, which provide specific grade-by-grade, year-by-year scores for the school as a whole and its subgroups.
B. Educational Programs

- Provide a detailed description of the curriculum offered and how it meets the requirements of 22 Pa. Code Ch. 4 (relating to academic standards and assessment). Also, provide a random sampling of lesson plans from different grade levels and academic disciplines.

The Commonwealth Connections Academy curriculum combines proven and rigorous print-based materials with the best in technology-enhanced learning to meet Pennsylvania academic and assessment standards while providing a significant portion of the instruction through the Internet in a developmentally appropriate way. The school’s proprietary curriculum, accredited by Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, brings together online synchronous and asynchronous instruction, multimedia textbooks and supplementary materials, including science supplies. Please see Attachment B for a random sample of aligned lesson plans and Attachment C for evidence of alignment to Pennsylvania standards and anchor objectives.

The following detailed description of the Commonwealth Connections Academy curriculum integrates some unique terminology – including several new terms since the last charter renewal – as defined below:

- **Learning Coach:** A parent, extended family member, or similarly qualified adult designated by the parent/guardian who works in person with each Commonwealth Connections Academy student under the guidance of the Commonwealth-licensed professional teacher. At the high school level, the Learning Coach is less involved with daily instruction but serves an important supervisory role for the student.

- **Learning Management System (LMS):** The platform for organizing and managing the entire Commonwealth Connections Academy educational environment, this proprietary, secure web-based software delivers every assignment and tracks every activity (whether online or offline), monitoring completion of individual lessons as well as mastery of discrete skills and knowledge. Parents and students must access the online Learning Management System to organize, document, and interact in the learning experience, ensuring Commonwealth Connections Academy an unprecedented level of time-on-task detail.

- **Personalized Performance Learning™:** This is the Connections Academy instructional model proposed for use by Commonwealth 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.

- **Curriculum-Based Assessments:** The Connections Academy program used by Commonwealth Connections Academy integrates curriculum-based assessments (CBAs) as a quick and effective way to gather, through telephone conversation, additional information on students’ understanding of concepts. Teachers conduct two types of CBAs: diagnostic curriculum-based assessment (DCBA) to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses in student mastery of concepts, and verification curriculum based Assessment (VCBA) to gauge authentic student learning of concepts previously graded as successfully completed with scores of B or higher.

- **Student Status/Escalation Process:** The Connections Academy system tracks and reports ongoing student attendance progress based on the objective numeric data generated by the LMS including student contact with Commonwealth Connections
Academy teachers, time-on-task, and completion of lessons and assessments. 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 problems.

- **LiveLesson® Sessions:** These innovative web conferencing sessions allow Commonwealth Connections Academy 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™.

- **Teachlets® Tutorials:** Highly interactive, asynchronous tutorial “movies” at the beginning of many 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.

- **WebMail:** The proprietary private email system included in the LMS. Because this system is “closed,” Commonwealth 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.

- **StarTrak:** This integrated rating system allows every Commonwealth Connections Academy student (along with every Learning Coach) to rate each lesson from a low of one star to a high of five stars. Ratings are used by curriculum staff to identify areas of needed improvement as well as curriculum approaches that work especially well.

The Commonwealth Connections Academy curriculum and instructional program are guided by the following principles, which reflect national standards of quality for online course and program design as promulgated by the International Association for K-12 Online Learning:

- Curriculum fosters breadth and depth of understanding in each subject area
- Content is aligned to state standards
- Curriculum is supported by quality, reputable, recently published textbooks and/or proven instructional resources and materials
- Content and assessments are accurate and unbiased
- Content is current, relevant and provides real-world applications
- Content is appropriate for the learner (age, ability, background, reading level, learning style)
- Instructional design is adaptable and flexible to meet individual needs of Learning Coaches and students
- Instructional design provides students with opportunities to improve learning skills using technological tools (e.g., virtual labs and instruments, Teachlet tutorials, business software, online calculator, WebQuests)
- Navigation is intuitive and age-appropriate
- Scope of course is appropriate with regard to amount of content, length of course and lessons, and course requirements
- Lesson introduction is effective and presents lesson objectives, accesses prior knowledge, sets expectations and motivates
- Background information effectively prepares students to access new content, skills and strategies
- Curriculum includes opportunities for developing problem-solving and critical thinking skills
- Curriculum includes opportunities for collaboration and independent study
- Curriculum includes opportunities to develop oral and written communication skills
- Curriculum incorporates timely and appropriate feedback to students
**Elementary/Middle School Curriculum:** The Commonwealth Connections Academy curriculum is individualized, personalized and delivered in a non-traditional environment to provide our students with optimum pathways to success. The rich Commonwealth Connections Academy K-8 curriculum integrates a wide variety of materials including textbooks, lesson plans and other content from a variety of leading publishers including Pearson®, McGraw-Hill®, Zaner-Bloser®, and others. In addition to high-quality print materials, the Connections Academy curriculum also features technology-based content from providers such as BrainPop®, SkillsTutor™, Compass Learning®, and United Streaming® and Grolier Online®. The curriculum is updated regularly, with Commonwealth Connections Academy Board approval, based on a rigorous analysis of student performance on Pennsylvania Standards as measured by state testing results and internal assessments.

The Connections Academy curriculum integrates a variety of proprietary and highly effective technology tools such as Teachlet tutorials – online animated tutorials developed by Connections Academy to introduce challenging topics and provide interactive practice – and LiveLesson sessions, 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 above more details.)

Foreign language instruction begins early at Commonwealth 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, Mandarin Chinese or Japanese. 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 Commonwealth Connections Academy program of instruction encourages connections with parents, family and the community and offers unique electives such as Home Life, which combines provides fun skill-building projects in which the whole family or people from the community can participate. These activities include cooking, crafts, sewing, home maintenance, family outings, and genealogy. New Home Life modules are added regularly, such as The Name of the Game: Discovering and Designing Board Games and What it Means to Be Green: Creating a Positive Impact on the Environment.

The 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.

The fundamentals of American Sign Language are explored in Connections Academy’s Sign Language course giving students an opportunity to explore vocabulary, grammar, and conversation, using basic signing and finger spelling techniques. Special activities and exercises help students to understand the culture of the deaf community.

Commonwealth Connections Academy also provides PSSA preparation for Grades 3-8 through a program called Study Island®. Each Study Island topic is built from one Pennsylvania standard and contains a lesson and assessment question. Students can choose either traditional tests or interactive games in order to go through the material. Commonwealth Connections Academy teachers then have access to real-time progress reports that analyze deficiencies and help target intervention. Commonwealth Connections Academy utilized Study Island to more precisely connect to state anchor objectives and provide students practice and instruction in the targeted areas.
Commonwealth Connections Academy uses “Math 24 — First in Math” to provide students with online interactive challenges to develop and improve critical math skills. This is a highly motivating program and has been proven to increase achievement in mathematics.

Programs from Learning A-Z are also used to supplement reading and literacy skills. For example, "Raz Kids," a program within Learning A-Z, provides an animated leveled reading library and online progress management system.

In 2009-2010, Commonwealth Connections Academy initiated the use of Scientific Learning’s Fast ForWord programs in grades K-8. Fast ForWord is a web-based brain training program that develops a strong foundation of cognitive and reading skills for a lifetime of successful learning. Used in conjunction with the previously described programs, Fast ForWord will assist in improving PSSA scores.

Commonwealth Connections Academy also launched Reading Horizons in 2009-2010 for students in grades 6 and up. Reading Horizons focuses on five key areas for reading success: Phonemic Awareness, Systematic and Explicit Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, and Comprehension. In 2010-2011, Commonwealth Connections Academy will expand the program to serve all students in grades K-12.

High School Curriculum: Commonwealth Connections Academy provides a balanced, challenging high school experience focused on students pursuing paths that lead to success, whether via college major or immediate career choice. Their personalized path is monitored along the way by the student, parents, teachers and guidance counselors. The Commonwealth Connections Academy curriculum provides a comprehensive high school program with four levels of academic coursework: Basic, Standard, Honors, and Advanced Placement. While all are designed to meet Pennsylvania Academic Standards and provide students a rigorous curriculum, levels enable differentiation based on student needs and career goals. Commonwealth Connections Academy students work with their school counselors to determine appropriate course level placement. The Connections Academy high school curriculum consists of more than 250 courses, including a wide variety of electives and intensive foreign language instruction from Spanish through Mandarin Chinese.

The Commonwealth Connections Academy high school program involves more online experience than the K-8 program, as appropriate for secondary school learners. Connections Academy’s high school program includes substantial teacher-directed instruction through synchronous and asynchronous e-learning tools. The Pennsylvania 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 addition, students have multiple offline assignments, projects, novels and practice work.

Commonwealth Connections Academy high school courses include extensive use of Teachlet tutorials, 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 sessions, Teachlet tutorials dramatically increase the effectiveness of the secondary school instructional model. In addition to Teachlet tutorials and LiveLesson sessions, the Commonwealth 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.

- **Describe the curriculum delivery method. Provide specific information pertaining to the hours of instruction; availability of teachers for direct assistance; method of instructional delivery, etc.**

The Commonwealth Connections Academy curriculum, instructional tools, and Learning Management System are available to students every day, around the clock, to facilitate learning anytime and anywhere. The program combines both asynchronous instruction, in which students and teachers each work in their own time, and synchronous instruction, in which students and teachers engage in real time. For both asynchronous and synchronous interactions, the Commonwealth Connections Academy teachers are available during extended school hours (generally 8 am to 4 pm), during which they provide direct assistance via webmail, telephone, and LiveLesson sessions. Teams of teachers are also available after school hours, from 4:30 to 8 pm, Monday through Friday, to provide one-on-one and small group tutoring sessions to support students in reaching mastery.

- **Describe how students are evaluated and how that evaluation is used to improve student achievement and attain learning objectives.**

Commonwealth Connections Academy’s student evaluation/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. The school also utilizes ongoing online and offline assessments to measure student progress on the curriculum, and a combination of proprietary and commercially available standardized assessment tools to measure student gains over the school year. Specifically, Commonwealth Connections Academy uses the following assessments and standardized tests to measure pupil progress:

  - **Placement process:** As part of the application process, Commonwealth 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.
  
  - **Baseline achievement data:** To the extent that state standardized test results are available for an incoming student, these results are integrated into that student’s basic information in the LMS; likewise, results for state standardized tests that students take while enrolled at Commonwealth Connections Academy are also included in the LMS, along data from the Longitudinal Evaluation of Academic Progress (LEAP, see below), DIBELS, and Terra Nova. This data is used to identify students in need of intervention and also to track progress within the year and year-over-year.
  
  - **Yearly progress:** In the value-added model of academic growth upon which Commonwealth Connections Academy is based, each student will demonstrate a year of academic growth for a year in school. Using its standards-based, technology-facilitated Longitudinal Evaluation of Academic Progress (LEAP) pre- and post-test, Commonwealth Connections Academy can predict student performance on the PSSA and gauge each student’s academic growth over the course of the year.
• **Ongoing informal assessments:** During each phase of their curriculum mastery, students engage in 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. The Learning Coach generally monitors student performance on these assessments with teachers providing input as needed.

• **Unit assessments and portfolios:** Each subject in the Commonwealth 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 Commonwealth Connections Academy’s certified teachers. Student report cards and grades will ultimately include a balanced combination of quizzes, tests, work samples (portfolio items) and Learning Coach feedback.

• **Curriculum-Based Assessments:** Curriculum-based assessments (CBAs) are Commonwealth Connections Academy’s quick and effective way of gathering formative information on students’ understanding of concepts. The mandatory regularly scheduled phone conversations between the teacher and student offer a valuable opportunity to conduct these assessments. Teachers conduct two types of CBAs: verification curriculum-based Assessment (VCBA) or diagnostic curriculum-based assessment (DCBA).

• **State standardized testing:** At in-person, proctored locations, Commonwealth Connections Academy students will participate in the PSSAs (and soon, the Keystone graduation assessments). Results of these annual assessments are analyzed carefully and integrated into the overall plan for improving each student’s performance.

In addition to the assessment methods described above, the Commonwealth Connections Academy LMS gathers very granular data on every student’s performance every day. During each phase of their curriculum mastery, students engage in many different types of evaluations, both formal and informal. Formal assessments include quizzes, unit tests, skills checks, portfolio items and graded discussions. Informal assessments include the variety of methods teachers use to gather ongoing feedback about student progress from both Learning Coaches and students, such as WebMail, LiveLesson sessions, phone conversations, and review of student work samples.

• **Describe teaching methods used to enhance student learning. Describe professional development provided by the Cyber Charter School and how the professional development has been used to enhance the delivery of instruction.**

Commonwealth Connections Academy’s instructional model is known as Personalized Performance Learning. This model provides a learning environment that is well supported by
a partnership of parents and teachers and by a sophisticated technology component. Key aspects of the instructional model are as follows:

- **The Personalized Learning Plan**: The centerpiece of instruction at Commonwealth 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 Commonwealth-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 Pennsylvania 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 online and offline textbooks, trade books, manipulatives, and consumables that Commonwealth Connections Academy provides.

- **The Learning Triad**: Instruction at Commonwealth Connections Academy surrounds each student with the resources needed for success. Each student is part of a “learning triad” as shown in the accompanying graphic.

- **A complete learning team**: At Commonwealth Connections Academy, student learning benefits from multiple stakeholders committed to seeing them achieve success including dedicated educators and involved parents who provide total support for the student’s PLP.
  - *Pennsylvania-licensed, highly qualified teachers*: Each Commonwealth Connections Academy student has a Pennsylvania-certified teacher specially trained in the Commonwealth Connections Academy curriculum and instructional method. Commonwealth Connections Academy emphasizes the direct involvement and responsibility of this instructional staff in assuring that students have mastered required skills and uses an innovative assessment engine to increase teacher productivity by auto-grading objective answers to permit teachers to devote their expertise to subjective measures. The school’s Learning Management System also provides innovative tools to deliver instruction, measure progress, enhance teacher productivity and meet regulatory requirements. 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 student’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 regular report cards and make promotion or retention decisions. Depending on the need of the learner, teacher contact –via telephone, LiveLesson session, and WebMail – with the
student and Learning Coach may be as frequent as several times a day. Teachers do not wait to be contacted; they are proactive participants in their students’ learning plans. In addition, Commonwealth Connections Academy families are always welcome to visit the school’s teaching centers during business hours to meet with their teachers in person.

- **Face-to-face Learning Coaches**: Each Commonwealth 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 Pennsylvania-certified professional teacher. Parent involvement is a centerpiece of the Commonwealth 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 own learning.

- **Expanded educational support**: The Commonwealth Connections Academy CEO and Principals coordinate the work of the teachers, using data from the Learning Management System to target curriculum and instructional resources toward specific student needs. Supporting the administrators and teachers in their work are the Special Education staff and Guidance Counselors along with personnel from the Connections Academy Education Resource Center (ERC). At the ERC, Connections Academy experts in special education, gifted education, and English language learning are on hand to assist the Commonwealth Connections Academy staff. Also at the ERC are curriculum specialists who are highly trained in distance education methodologies and specific subject areas. Curriculum specialists are available by telephone and email to the Commonwealth Connections Academy staff for assistance in addressing particular curriculum topics or in customizing curriculum for particular student needs. In effect, each Commonwealth 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.

The primary building blocks of the Commonwealth 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*¹, 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 Commonwealth 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?" 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 Commonwealth 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 Wenglinsky 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* shows that the unique ability of an online teacher to communicate one-on-one with students and offer personalized feedback – as teachers at Commonwealth Connections Academy do – is key to student success in virtual learning environments.

- **Attach the school calendar for the current school year and for next school year.**

  The 2010-11 School Calendar approved by the Board of Trustees is show as Attachment D. Also provided in Attachment D is a draft 2011-12 School Calendar, which has not yet been reviewed by the Board.

- **Attach a copy of the School Improvement Plan if one has been developed.**

  The 2009-10 School Improvement Plan has been filed with the Pennsylvania Department of Education but is included as Attachment E, along with previous School Improvement Plans, which have also been filed with the Department.

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II. School Operations and Management

A. Teacher Evaluation and Professional Development

• How are teachers and administrators evaluated? Describe the standards for teacher and staff performance.

Commonwealth Connections Academy uses a carefully constructed evaluation system which promotes focused development of professional goals and objective measurement of core competencies in a transparent evaluation environment. The steps in the evaluation process are as follows:

• **Goal Setting:** At the beginning of the school year, or upon hire, managers meet with employees to discuss and set goals. Progress on goals is revisited throughout the year.

• **Competencies:** Employees are also evaluated on professional and/or instructional competencies, depending on their position. Competencies include areas like professionalism, functional expertise, and teamwork.

• **Mid-year Review:** Managers conduct mid-year reviews to discuss progress. Managers use data from the LMS – including the responsiveness to students, timeliness of grading, student progress, and more – to measure teachers’ performance.

• **Annual Performance Reviews:** Annual performance reviews are conducted at the end of the fiscal/school year.

• **Performance Tracking:** Performance is tracked online using the Ultipro Performance Management system.

For 2009-10 and going forward, each Commonwealth Connections Academy staff member will receive an overall rating from his or her supervisor of one of the following: Rarely Meets Expectations, Sometimes Meets Expectations, Frequently Meets Expectations, Sometimes Exceeds Expectations, or Frequently Exceeds Expectations.

In addition, bonus compensation for teachers and administrators is determined through the setting and evaluation of quantitative annual school goals (tied to the overall school goals) set by the Board of Trustees. These goals include specific AYP, PSSA score, and parent satisfaction metrics. For 2010-11, the Board of Trustees has acted to provide an additional bonus (up to 5%) to teachers and administrators if the school makes AYP.

• Discuss why that process was chosen and how it has evolved and been refined over the course of the charter.

The Commonwealth Connections Academy teacher evaluation process has evolved over time to make ever better use of detailed data from the LMS while providing support for teachers to continuously improve their practice. The UltiPro online performance management system also facilitates the connection of teachers’ individual goals to the school’s annual goals and to the overall charter goals for better synchronization and better results.
• Provide evidence and discuss the quality of teaching at the Cyber Charter School. Include outcomes of teacher evaluations and teacher surveys in the discussion.

The Commonwealth Connections Academy teacher professional development program and teacher evaluation approach have together produced a highly skilled, highly cohesive, and very stable teaching staff. As noted below in the staff turnover discussion, teacher attrition during the school year is very rare while the percentage of teachers returning each year is typically 95% or more. On the 2010 Employee Satisfaction survey, Commonwealth Connections Academy staff rated highly (5.6 on a 6-point scale) their ability to be involved in setting and tracking their performance goals, the sense of teamwork among their colleagues (5.12) and Commonwealth Connections Academy as a great place to work (5.13). In addition, more than 50% of Commonwealth Connections Academy teachers have advanced degrees, and all participate in required training, leading them to rate their preparedness for the job at hand 5.5 on a 6-point scale.

This quality of teaching is widely acknowledged as a differentiator for Commonwealth Connections Academy, setting it apart among cyber schools in Pennsylvania. In the 2010 Parent Satisfaction Survey, more than 98% of Commonwealth Connections Academy parents said they were satisfied with the helpfulness of their children’s teachers, and 95% would recommend the program to other families for that reason, among others.

• Discuss staff turnover and retention patterns. Drawing upon exit interviews and surveys, explain why teachers choose to return or not to return to the school.

For the small number of teachers who choose not to return to Commonwealth Connections Academy each year, a review of exit interviews suggest the top reasons for not returning are career change or withdrawal from the workforce at this time or relocation out of the state.

A smaller number of non-returning staff cites the commute to school office as a reason for leaving. Unlike other cyber charter schools in the state, Commonwealth Connections Academy requires most staff to work together in an office location rather than out of their homes. While teachers who want to work from home exclusively may not choose to join the Commonwealth Connections Academy staff or stay with it, the school’s adoption of part-time work-at-home privileges for high performing staff may help Commonwealth Connections Academy retain excellent teachers who prefer not to work in the office every day.

• Use the following table to report professional staff turnover/retention data for each year of the past charter.

During the current charter period, Commonwealth Connections Academy has experienced significant growth in staff, reflecting its 400% growth in student enrollment. At the same time, turnover of existing staff has been minimal. For example, for the 2009-10 school year, all but 7 (6%) of the previous year’s teaching staff returned as teachers, joining 52 new colleagues for a total teaching staff of 154. By the end of the 2009-10 school year, just 2 teachers (1%) had left the school. 2010-11 began with 24 new teachers and just 3% attrition of teachers from the previous year. As noted in Section 5, Plans for the Future/Measurable Goals and
Objectives, the school will focus even more intently on limiting attrition among teachers with high ratings on the evaluation process.

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>Year 4</td>
<td>This Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of professional staff</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>173</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of professional staff employed in September who returned from previous year</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>149</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of professional staff employed in June who were also employed by the school the previous September</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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A similar pattern of low attrition is reflected among the non-teaching professional staff (see below).

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<td>Year 1</td>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>Year 4</td>
<td>This Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of professional staff</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of professional staff employed in September who returned from previous year</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of professional staff employed in June who were also employed by the school the previous September</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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- **Complete the table below for all professional staff members.**

Please see Attachment F for the completed roster of all professional staff members using the table provided. Important note: For security purposes and with permission of the Department, we have masked all Social Security Numbers on this roster. A separate,
password-protected electronic file with professional staff Social Security Numbers has been provided to the Department along with this renewal application.

- If not currently meeting the requirement that 75% of its professional staff hold appropriate certification, how will the school meet this requirement? Discuss how the Cyber Charter School meets the requirements for “Highly Qualified” teachers.

Commonwealth Connections Academy exceeds the requirement that 75% of its professional staff holds appropriate certification, and complies with state and federal requirements for Highly Qualified teachers.

- Submit documentation and discuss evidence that teachers and other staff have the training and resources they need to perform effectively. Describe the professional development that is in place to support teachers so that more students are meeting the standards. Describe why this professional development was selected and how it relates to the overall Cyber Charter School mission and to student outcomes.

The Commonwealth Connections Academy Board of Trustees approved the following Teacher Training and Professional Development plan for 2010-11, noting that it maintained the most effective elements of previous years’ plans while adding targeted new training topics and mechanisms. The focus on the STAAIR Instructional Model and using data in a precisely targeted way to improve student performance is directly connected to the school’s goals regarding AYP and necessary PSSA gains for specific sub-groups.

**Training / Professional Development Objectives**
The Commonwealth Connections Academy teacher training and professional development programs aim to equip teachers with the following:

- A working knowledge of the Connections Academy curriculum and how to implement it in a virtual environment
- Strategies and best practices for virtual learning and instruction
- How to use and navigate the tools of the Learning Management System (LMS)
- How to develop personalized learning plans and individualize instructional programs
- Forms of assessment and how to use test results and data to guide instruction
- Knowledge of school processes and policies
- How to foster a virtual school community

**Training / Professional Development Elements**
The following training programs are provided to Commonwealth Connections Academy teachers:

1. **Teacher Orientation and Program Handbook Courses**
   *Teacher Orientation Course (Developed by Connections Academy)*
   All new Commonwealth Connections Academy teachers (and administrators) complete a self-guided, Connections Academy-developed teacher orientation course. This course is delivered through the Learning Management System (LMS) and contains actual lessons, assessments, and links to online tutorials. The focus of this course is to prepare teachers for the first few weeks of school. It covers “the basics” including: curriculum, assessments, personalizing instruction, school-year events, grading, communication, and essential LMS tools. Upon successful completion of this course and its assessments,
teachers are ready to begin instruction. Teachers must complete this course within their first 30 days of employment with an overall score of 80% or higher.

*Returning Teacher Orientation Course (Developed by Connections Academy)*
This course is designed for teachers who are returning to Commonwealth Connections Academy. As with the Teacher Orientation Course, this course is delivered through the LMS and contains lessons, assessments, and links to online tutorials. The first unit of the course includes information and tips about procedures, LMS features, and instructional programs that are new or updated for the current school year. The remaining units are identical to those found in the Teacher Orientation course for new teachers and are there for the returning teachers' reference. Returning teachers must complete the course's assessment with an overall score of 80% or higher during the first 30 days of the school year.

*Adjunct Teacher Orientation Course (Developed by Connections Academy)*
The Adjunct Teacher Orientation Course is a mandatory, graded component of the Teacher Training Program designed specifically for any Commonwealth Connections Academy's part-time teachers. The course lessons guide our adjunct teachers through a general overview of Connections Academy and its curriculum, their roles and responsibilities as an adjunct teacher, and those parts of the Learning Management System that are central to their teaching assignments. Adjunct teachers complete brief assessments throughout the course and must complete the entire course with an overall score of 80% or better within their first 30 days of employment.

*Program Handbook (Developed by Connections Academy)*
Once school is up and running, Connections Academy presents more segments of the training courses to teachers on an ongoing basis. These segments contain information about more complex features and functions of the LMS, instructional processes, and processes that teachers need to implement once school is successfully under way. These segments are clustered together in the Program Handbook section of each of the orientation courses. Together, the Teacher Orientation and Program Handbook courses create a one-stop shop for the essential LMS and Connections Academy processes and procedures our teachers need.

2. *Connections Academy Professional Development Sessions*
Connections Academy provides teachers with ongoing professional development activities throughout the year. Presenters with various backgrounds and areas of content expertise conduct live tutorial sessions on a rotating basis throughout the school year. Teachers virtually attend monthly sessions throughout the year including such topics as: formative assessment and data driven decisions making, using data to guide instruction, implementing specific instructional strategies, current curriculum-specific topics and trends, effective teaching strategies and communication skills for a virtual environment, utilizing the state standards to guide instruction, educational technology, and educational trends.

As noted above, teachers complete online assessments to evaluate their understanding of the concepts included in their Teacher Orientation courses. Professional development sessions also use evaluation surveys and collaborative tools to elicit teacher and administrator feedback. Audits, evaluations, and site-visits are used to gauge the effectiveness of the training and to ensure initiatives are implemented with high fidelity. Upon successful completion of the professional development session,
including participating in an “after training collaborative discussion” and completing a survey about the session, teachers earn professional development hours, tracked via the UltiPro online performance management system.

3. **University-level Online Instruction Course (Developed by a University Partner)**

   After teachers successfully complete the Connections Academy-developed training course centered around the LMS and Connections Academy processes, they have the opportunity to enroll in an online graduate-level course through Boise State University specially designed for Connections Academy teachers that focuses on online instructional practices. The teachers are able to earn graduate credit upon successful completion of this course. In addition, Connections Academy has a new partnership with American Public University whereby teachers can take courses to enhance their skills, totaling up to $4,000 per year, and Connections Academy will pay those fees for teachers. Should a grade of B not be earned or should the teacher terminate employment with Connections Academy, those monies are to be repaid.

4. **Connections Academy Leadership Academy**

   Connections Academy cultivates internal leadership candidates through a series of meetings that focus on administrative, policy, and operational issues. This forum promotes critical thinking in the areas of educational research, administrative practice, and supervisory proficiency as they relate to virtual and alternative instruction.

5. **Professional Learning Community (PLC)**

   The Connections Academy Professional Learning Community is a community of educators dedicated to shared values and vision, working and learning collaboratively, shared decision-making, collective creativity, and supportive and shared leadership. The PLC focuses on four major areas, each containing several sub-areas:

   - **Professional Development:** Professional Organizations, Current Professional Development Opportunities, offered through Connections Academy as well as elsewhere, Continuing Education, Conferences, Webinars, and Workshops, Online Professional Development Courses, and Education Resources and Research.

   - **Networking:** Message Boards for teachers, special educators, and school counselors, Teacher-Teacher Collaboration, Shared Content of teacher-created resources, Shared Decision-Making Activities

   - **Instructional Support:** 2010-2011 Course Links, Clubs and Activities information, Instructional Software, Instructional Tools, Instructional Support Review Committee, Teacher to Teacher Sharing, links to SSTAIR model and Supplemental Tier 1, 2, and 3 Programs, Assessment Information, Academic Integrity & Writing Resources.

   - **School Support:** Help Desk information, weekly announcements and Updates from School Support, updates on processes and the LMS, information about our monthly Brown Bag Discussions, and links to School Support Training.

**Training and Professional Development Delivery Models**

Connections Academy uses several models for delivering training and professional development to school-based personnel:

1. **Live Training:** Recognizing the tenets of effective professional development established by the National Staff Development Council (NSDC), interpersonal
connections increase the effect of training for adult learners. Annual face-to-face training by Connections Academy's School Support and Curriculum and Instruction teams helps establish this rapport and promotes collegial learning communities that are continued throughout the year via remote interactions.

2. “Train-the-Trainer”: Each school selects several teachers to serve as training representatives regarding important, school-based issues including such areas as best practices, curriculum, electives, strategies, and technology. These representatives communicate regularly, learn the newly-presented information, and ensure that their fellow staff members are fully trained.

3. Distance Learning: In line with our commitment to use cutting-edge technology to promote learning for students, Connections Academy also implements this model for teacher training and professional development. Real-time trainings and professional development sessions conducted via the computer and teleconferences along with recorded trainings are offered throughout the year on a variety of school-specific and system-wide initiatives. Self-guided tutorials, FAQ documents, webinars, and open-forum question and answer sessions provide a wide array of training and professional development opportunities to meet the diverse needs and schedule of all stakeholders.

Connections Academy uses LiveLesson sessions to hold online meetings. School Support and Curriculum and Instruction representatives use this technology to hold sessions to demonstrate new LMS functionality, to present and model best practices in online teaching, and to showcase available resources and tools for online teaching and learning. The technology also allows school-based representatives to record sessions so that teachers can play them back at any time, providing teachers continuous access to pertinent information.

School-Specific Professional Development
Commonwealth Connections Academy school administrators establish a schedule of local professional development activities that relate to and fulfill the school, state, or district requirements. Such activities are coordinated and tracked on a local level.

2010-11 Teacher Training and Professional Development Topics
The following topics represent a sample of major professional development initiatives for the 2010-11 school year. Other program/technology specific trainings occur on an as-needed basis throughout the year. School-specific training requests supplement the overall development goals.

- Professional Learning Community as Teacher-Central for Resources, Communication, and Collaboration
- The STAAIR Instructional Model: Essential Skills and Standards, Assessments, Interventions, and Response: Data-Driven Decision Making
  - Using data from identified, essential instructional objectives and corresponding assessment data to monitor student progress
  - Using formative assessment data to inform instruction
  - Using LEAP data for formative assessment
  - Using Curriculum Based Assessments (CBAs) for formative assessment
  - Using formative assessment data to assign appropriate interventions
  - Using intervention data to inform instruction
- SSTAIR Instructional Model: Response to Intervention (RTI) model via Multi-Tiered Interventions
o Tier One
  • Curriculum Trainings
    ▪ Core Curriculum and Instructional Program
    ▪ Best Practices of Online Teaching
    ▪ Resources and Tools to Enhance Online Teaching and Learning
      ▪ LiveLesson synchronous instruction
      ▪ EBSCO
      ▪ Skills for Success (Study Island)
      ▪ SkillsTutor®
  o Tier Two - Supplemental Instructional Programs
    ▪ LiveLesson synchronous instruction
    ▪ Raz-Kids™
    ▪ Headsprout®
    ▪ SkillsTutor®
  o Tier Three – Alternative Instructional Programs
    ▪ PACE
    ▪ Fast ForWord

• Focus on New 2010-11 K-12 Curriculum
  o Elementary
    ▪ Art 2 and Art 5
    ▪ PE 2 and PE 5
    ▪ State Histories
  o High School
    ▪ Consumer Math
    ▪ English 9
    ▪ Geography and Society
    ▪ German III
    ▪ Statistics
  o Electives
    ▪ Web Design/Game Design

• New Clubs & Activities
  o Elem/Middle
    ▪ Home Life
    ▪ Quiz Bowl
    ▪ Arts and Crafts
    ▪ DimensionM
  o Middle/High
    ▪ Art Club
    ▪ Broadcast Club
    ▪ Innovators Club
    ▪ Quiz Bowl
    ▪ DimensionM

• New Instructional Tools
  o Workpad
  o Rock and Mineral Kit
  o FlashCards
• Promoting Positive and Collaborative Relationships between Teachers and Learning Coaches
• Topics in Special Education
• Internet Safety Training
• LMS Specific Training:
  o Sectioning & Course Placement
  o Scheduling
  o Using the Section Gradebook Features
  o Creating Custom Assessments
  o Accessing, Interpreting, and Using Data View Exports to Make Program Decisions
  o Communication & Documentation: Student Logs and WebMails
  o Electives, Clubs, & Activity Sign-Up and Management
  o Modifying Lessons to Meet Student Needs
  o Attendance and Student Escalation Status
  o Accessing & Analyzing User Information
  o Message Board Creation and Monitoring

• Does the Cyber Charter School have any union contracts with professional employees? If so, please attach.
  Commonwealth Connections Academy does not have any union contracts with professional employees.
B. Financial Solvency

• How frequently are the school budget and financial records reviewed by the Board of Trustees?

The Commonwealth Connections Academy Board of Trustees has adopted a formal process of developing and approving its annual budget. This process starts in January with the establishment of an enrollment target by the Board. Through a highly iterative and interactive process, a draft budget is brought to the full board for consideration and approval at its May meeting (this date may be revised, depending on specific circumstances). This budget draws upon the goals of the Board for the upcoming school year and the results of the past, as appropriate. Driven by the Board, the process includes many stakeholders: the Board itself, school leadership, feedback from students and parents, and its management partner, Connections Academy.

The Board reviews the adopted annual budget and compares it to actual results on a monthly basis. A financial package is provided to the Board and reviewed at its meeting every month, which includes a comparative revenue and expense statement along with all supporting documents substantiating the current month’s activity. Importantly, the balance of fiscal year is reforecasted every month in order to provide the Board with maximum visibility of the full year’s results, thus allowing them the time to make decisions to impact that projection, if desired.

• Who is responsible to review contracts, invoices, receivables and who is responsible to sign checks?

Contracts – Major contracts and agreements executed by the Board include organizational documents, charter agreements, the service agreement with Connections Academy, LLC, and the service agreement with Charter School Choice (“CSC”, third party fiscal agent). Unless otherwise authorized or designated by the Board, all contracts entered into by the School for a monetary amount over Five Thousand ($5,000) Dollars require the signature of the President of the Board of Trustees. Contracts in a monetary amount of less than Five Thousand ($5,000) Dollars are signed by the CEO.

Accounts Receivable – The School contracts with CSC to manage its billing and collections of district receivables, including the collection of certain district invoices directly from PDE. CSC has designed effective processes to insure that the most current available district rates are used, accounting records reflect the proper application of district payments, and collections are received in a timely manner. Before monthly invoices are sent, a rigorous review of student data is undertaken to minimize the possibility of erroneous billing of districts. The school’s fiscal partners, both CSC and Connections Academy, assist the school’s business office and the Board in monitoring the outstanding receivables of the school.

Check Signing – As reviewed and designated annually by the Board, the check signors are: Dr. Dennis Tulli, CEO; David Taylor, President, Board of Trustees; and Michelle Ciora, Treasurer, Board of Trustees. During the course of operations, Dr. Tulli is the primary check signor and reviews all invoices along with supporting documentation prior to signing. Connections Academy will also review the check activity monthly during its monthly
accounting support of the school. CSC also reviews a summary of this activity upon its monthly review of all school fiscal activity.

**Invoice/Expense Approval** – All invoices must contain evidence of approval by an authorizing supervisor prior to being processed for payment. As noted, these invoices are also reviewed by the CEO at the time of check signing. Additional review of invoices and expenses are performed by Connections Academy and CSC during the performance of their contracted finance/accounting services.

**Note:** Reflecting its exponential growth and the complexity of operations that has accompanied it, Commonwealth Connections Academy is in the process of establishing its own Business Office to support the increasing administrative needs of the school. The Business Office is being designed to bolster the school’s continuous improvement efforts regarding its control structure and its efficiency of managing school funds. The Business Office will serve to centralize the processing and accounting of all financial transactions conducted by the school administration. The new Business Office will collaborate directly with the EMO’s Finance Office and the school’s current contracted business consultant to ensure smooth hand-off and ongoing interaction.

**Annual Audit** – The Board has engaged Siegal and Drossner, PC to perform Commonwealth Connections Academy’s annual independent audit. All audit reports have been previously submitted to the Department, and copies are provided in Attachment I for convenience.

- Has there been an independent audit performed each year of the charter? For each audit, if not previously submitted to the Department, attach with the Renewal Application.

  An independent audit has been performed every year of the charter at the direction of the Board of Trustees. These audits have all been submitted to the Department but are also shown in Attachment I for convenience.

- Discuss the school’s financial controls and procedures for the management of financial resources.

  Commonwealth Connections Academy maintains fiscal controls and procedures 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.

  The Board-adopted fiscal procedures provided in Attachment G offer a full discussion of the school’s fiscal controls and procedures for managing financial resources.

- Attach a copy of the most recent financial statement.

  See the June 30, 2010 Unaudited Financial Statement in Attachment H.

- How many bank accounts exist for the Cyber Charter School? Provide bank locations, type of accounts and account numbers.

  Commonwealth Connections Academy maintains three bank accounts with PNC Bank:
If applicable, discuss and provide documentation regarding how any findings from any Auditor General’s report were addressed and resolved.

In Attachment J, see the PA Auditor General Report dated March 25, 2010 and response letter dated August 17, 2010 to the Department of Education.

Explain how the Cyber Charter School commits resources in ways that ensure it achieves its mission.

Commonwealth Connections Academy invests the majority of its resources directly into student instruction, through the employment and training of its expert teaching corps, licensing of top-quality curriculum, and access to technology such as the Learning Management System that connects it all together (see Investment Chart on the next page). In addition, Commonwealth Connections Academy has gone beyond these baseline investments in 2010-11 to provide for summer school, after-hours tutoring, the Mobile Classroom program, additional supplementary curriculum, and additional bonus compensation to staff members if both their students and the school show targeted test score improvements. All of these uses of the resources are directly connected to the school’s goals of meeting the state’s PSSA benchmarks and achieving AYP.

What is the Fund Reserve Balance as of the date of Renewal Application submission?

The June 30, 2010 fund balance was reviewed by the Board of Trustees during its most recent August 25, 2010 Board meeting. The school’s total unaudited fund balance as of June 30, 2010 was $12,292,410, of which $10,422,425 has been invested or designated by the Board for specific use. A summary of the school’s fund balance as of June 30, 2010 is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Board Designated Fund Balances:</th>
<th>Unaudited June 30, 2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purchase/Construction of a School Facility(ies)</td>
<td>$3,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Capital (District Payments)</td>
<td>500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New/Expanded Teacher and Administrative Offices for FY11</td>
<td>400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast ForWord FY11 Purchase Commitment</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student and Staff Technology Purchases for FY11</td>
<td>2,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Classroom Purchase</td>
<td>300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Capital Assets</td>
<td>2,622,425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer School</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL Designated/Expended/Encumbered</strong></td>
<td><strong>10,422,425</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Undesignated Fund Balance</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,869,985</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Fund Balance</strong></td>
<td><strong>12,292,410</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Cut and paste (or recreate) the table below into your report in order to show how the charter has made investments over the last five years in staff and professional development, in books, technology, and other supplies, in ways that are consistent with the Cyber Charter School’s priorities as stated in the current charter agreement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Investment Area:</th>
<th>Actual FY 07</th>
<th>Actual FY 08</th>
<th>Actual FY 09</th>
<th>Actual FY 10</th>
<th>Budgeted FY 11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staffing</td>
<td>2,767,476.51</td>
<td>4,916,177.31</td>
<td>7,711,561.55</td>
<td>11,139,352.12</td>
<td>16,467,260.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>201,906.89</td>
<td>262,863.69</td>
<td>426,889.97</td>
<td>570,972.40</td>
<td>754,800.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Text &amp; Instructional Material</td>
<td>2,055,775.02</td>
<td>2,894,769.26</td>
<td>4,265,760.62</td>
<td>6,516,238.39</td>
<td>8,030,749.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Technology</td>
<td>1,406,119.29</td>
<td>2,190,032.80</td>
<td>5,165,228.80</td>
<td>5,090,068.50</td>
<td>7,256,272.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other- Summer School</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>65,930.00</td>
<td>150,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Other- Software</td>
<td>920,949.00</td>
<td>1,223,046.67</td>
<td>1,824,286.67</td>
<td>2,460,163.34</td>
<td>3,027,109.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other- Facility Leases</td>
<td>116,831.63</td>
<td>156,073.00</td>
<td>263,434.81</td>
<td>494,585.53</td>
<td>591,187.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Includes items both purchased and leased/licensed from third parties.

• Provide any other information or data that describes how resources have been used and/or leveraged to further the school’s mission and support the school’s unique design.

In addition to the commitment of resources described on the previous page, two investments noted in the chart above provide further evidence of how Commonwealth Connections Academy’s charter goals and priorities guide its use of resources. The school’s investment in summer school courses is tied specifically to credit recovery and skill building for students who need substantial additional instructional time to master core curriculum and pass key assessments. The Technology investment includes the purchase of additional laptop computers to provide a more portable and flexible end-user experience for Commonwealth Connections Academy students. The investment in Facility Leases reflects a desire by the Board of Trustees and school administrators to place cadres of teachers in different geographic centers around the state, ensuring greater accessibility for parents and students.

• Will the school’s facilities meet the needs of the school for the next five years? Provide addresses of all facilities, the ownership of each facility and the purpose for which each facility is used. Will the Cyber Charter School’s administrative offices remain in the current facility? If not, describe where the Cyber Charter School’s administrative office will be located and why the new location has been selected (if applicable)? Include valid certificates of occupancy for all new sites, if applicable.

The school currently has its main administrative and teaching center located at 4050 Crums Mill Road (Suite 303), Harrisburg, PA 17112. The school anticipates that this location will continue to serve as its main location for the foreseeable future. In order to bring its program and staff closer to the students it serves around the state, the school has leased facilities in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Lehighton, and Williamsport, with additional lease discussions underway in Scranton. As the school’s enrollment grows and its programs and services evolve, the Board will continue to revisit its physical presence in the state and make decisions, as necessary. To prepare for the possibility of purchasing a facility, the Board has designated $3.5 million of its Total Net Assets for this purpose.

Commonwealth Connections Academy Cyber Charter Renewal 30
The table below shows the location, ownership, and purpose of each current facility. It should be noted that none of the owners of these facilities is related to any board member, school leader, Connections Academy, or CSC.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Owner</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4050 Crums Mill Road, Suite 303 Harrisburg, PA 17122</td>
<td>Crums Mill Road Limited Partnership</td>
<td>Administrative, Teaching, Testing, and Student Support Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2085 N. 63rd Street Philadelphia, PA 19151</td>
<td>Juvenile Justice Center of Philadelphia</td>
<td>Teaching, Testing, and Student Support Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>613 Blakesless Blvd Drive East Suite 203 Lehighton, PA 18235</td>
<td>William L. Grant</td>
<td>Teaching and Student Support Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penn Center Monroeville, #410 201 Penn Center Boulevard Pittsburgh, PA 15235</td>
<td>Regus Management Group, LLC</td>
<td>Teaching and Student Support Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Tower Square 1020 Commerce Park Drive, Suite 1B Williamsport, PA 17701</td>
<td>Water Tower Square, LLC</td>
<td>Teaching and Student Support Center</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Copies of leases for these locations – which are already on file with the Department – are included for convenience in Attachment K. Copies of certificates of occupancy are provided in Attachment L.
C. School Governance

- Provide a list of Board members who have served and the dates each has served since the Cyber Charter School’s inception. Discuss leadership changes on the Board and in the school administration and explain why those changes were effected.

The table below shows all Commonwealth Connections Academy Board of Trustee members since the school was started. The Board has been very stable, losing only four (4) members since 2003 due to life changes for the members themselves. One founding member recently returned to the Board after a three-year break. Board leadership has also remained steadfast. Signed Ethics Forms for current Board members are shown in Attachment M.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Board Member</th>
<th>Dates of Service</th>
<th>Board Position</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>David Taylor</td>
<td>1/6/03-present</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>Elected President in 2007 and has since been re-elected annually; previously served as Secretary/Treasurer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Community Representative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerald Birmelin</td>
<td>7/30/07-present</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Former PA legislator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Policy Sector Representative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle Ciora</td>
<td>3/26/08-present</td>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Elected Treasurer in 2009 (following retirement of previous Treasurer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Representative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gail Hawkins-Bush</td>
<td>7/14/03-present</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education &amp; Community Representative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheryl Lozier</td>
<td>6/28/06-present</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Representative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paula Hearns</td>
<td>8/26/09-present</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Representative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcie Mulligan</td>
<td>9/22/10-present</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Founding parent member; served as President from 2006-07; stepped down from Board due to personal commitments, and returned in Sept. 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Representative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If the Cyber Charter School utilizes an external management organization, describe how that relationship has functioned over the course of the charter and provide any changes to the management agreement that were not previously provided to the Department.

To fulfill the cyber school vision captured in its charter, the Commonwealth Connections Academy Board of Trustees elected to contract with Connections Academy LLC, a nationally known provider of quality virtual curriculum, technology and school management services. The original Professional Services Agreement was negotiated by the Board’s independent counsel in 2003 for five-year term. Seven (7) amendments to this original contract were subsequently approved by the Board over the next five years and submitted to the Department, adding grade levels and otherwise refining the document to reflect the school’s evolving reality. In 2008, Board counsel negotiated a three-year renewal that included added deficit protection for the school and reaffirmed the right of the Board to...
Commonwealth Connections Academy anticipates negotiating a new Professional Services Agreement with Connections Academy prior to the expiration of the current contract on June 30, 2011.

- **Describe and discuss how the Board has held the external management organization accountable for measurable results.**

  To date, the Commonwealth Connections Academy Board of Trustees has used ongoing oversight of its Professional Services Agreement with Connections Academy as the primary tool for EMO evaluation. The Board adopts an annual approval calendar, reviewed quarterly for changes, that includes the deliverables contained in the professional services agreement. The Board requires the EMO to provide it with annual in-depth discussions of key elements of the agreement such as curriculum design, content, and delivery and financial management, in addition to monthly financial reports reviewed in advance by the Board Treasurer. Among other objective non-financial metrics, the Board looks to data from PSSA testing and the Parent Satisfaction Survey to determine how the EMO is performing. The Professional Services Agreement ensures the right of the Board of Trustees to terminate the relationship with Connections Academy at any time.

- **Include as appendices and discuss evaluations of the management organization conducted by the Board and any relevant reports from the management organization to the Board.**

  During Fall 2010, the Commonwealth Connections Academy Board of Trustees will consider adopting a formal EMO evaluation process, using a set of tools developed by Greater Capacity Consortium – a national non-profit focused on building Board capacity and expertise – specifically for use by cyber charter schools. This EMO evaluation process has been piloted by several other Connections Academy-affiliated schools nationally. A copy of the proposed EMO evaluation instrument is included in Attachment O.

- **Provide clear explanations and evidence of how the Cyber Charter School has complied with requirements and regulations in each of the following areas. Address any complaints and corrections made regarding compliance in each area.**

  - **Special Education Students**

    Commonwealth Connections Academy complies with Chapter 711 and all other requirements and regulations relating to Special Education, in accordance with which Commonwealth Connections Academy is committed to serving children with disabilities whether such children are currently or newly identified as disabled. Approximately 16% of Commonwealth Connections Academy students qualify for Special Education services. Among the parents of students with special needs, an unprecedented 88% say they are satisfied with the program that Commonwealth Connections Academy provides their students, and 91% say their child’s teacher provides sufficient support. Throughout the current charter term, during which more than 1,500 Special Education students have been served, there have been a total of five (5) special education-related complaints filed against the school. Four (4) of these have been settled and one is still in negotiation.
- **English Language Learners**
  Commonwealth Connections Academy complies with all requirements and regulations relating to English Language Learners, including assessing language acquisition needs following enrollment and providing services toward mastery of English. Approximately 5% of Commonwealth Connections Academy students qualify for ELL services. There have been no ELL-related complaints against the school.

- **Administration of the PSSA**
  Commonwealth Connections Academy complies with all requirements and regulations relating to administration of the PSSA. The school provides secure, proctored testing locations within less than an hour’s drive of students’ homes, and ensures special testing accommodations for students requiring them. Each year of the current charter, more than 95% of students eligible to participate in PSSA testing did so. There have been no PSSA-related complaints against the school.

- **Health and Safety Requirements**
  Commonwealth Connections Academy complies with all requirements and regulations relating to health and safety, providing a safe and healthy workplace for Commonwealth Connections Academy staff and ensuring safety for all during school-related activities. There have been no health or safety related complaints against the school by parents or students. One complaint by an employee regarding workplace air quality in the school’s former Mechanicsburg setting was successfully resolved through appeals to the landlord and altering the placement of the complainant’s work station.

- **Describe how the Sunshine Notices are provided for all public meetings and how parents are involved in Board Meetings.**
  Sunshine notices are provided for all public meetings annually through a local newspaper in which the Board approved Board meeting schedule is published. For each meeting, the agenda is posted at the school’s location and on the school’s website, providing detailed instructions about how to participate in Board meetings and how to address the Board. The Board also has always had a minimum of two parent members to ensure representation of parent interests; the current Board has four parent members.
III. Overall School Design

A. Communications to Parents and Community

- How is the school accountable to parents and the community? Provide examples of communications, outreach, marketing of the Cyber Charter School, etc.

Commonwealth Connections Academy strives to maintain clear, accountable communication with parents and the community. Through its outreach and marketing activities, the school provides detailed information about its program and showcases the experiences of actual participating parents who can assist others in making informed choices about enrollment. In addition, the school maintains an active press/media connection to ensure accurate, timely information in the community press. Families who are participating in Commonwealth Connections Academy benefit from frequent homepage announcements, monthly newsletters, and the opportunity to provide feedback on the program at any time through the LMS. Samples of outreach communications are provided in Attachment P.

- Provide evidence that the Board of Trustees has been responsive and effective as a governing entity. Discuss how formal complaints have been investigated and resolved. Provide specific examples of governance issues and how they have been resolved.

The Commonwealth Connections Academy Board of Trustees has been a stable and diverse body since the school’s founding (see list of members below and discussion above). The Board has sought to build its effectiveness through thorough Board training as provided by the Greater Capacity Consortium (average 2-3 trainings per year) and other professional development opportunities. To more effectively measure its effectiveness, the Board is expected to act in Fall 2010 to launch a formal, annual self-evaluation using a process and instrument provided by Greater Capacity Consortium.

- Describe the composition of the Cyber Charter School’s governance structure, specifying how it includes parents and the community. Be specific about how the Board is accessible and accountable to parents. Include dates, times and agendas of important parent meetings or events and include copies of sign-in sheets for the session.

Governance at Commonwealth Connections Academy is structured to ensure representation by parents and the community.

For example, the Board of Trustees includes parents, community members, and educators, as noted in the list of current Board members, below:

Commonwealth Connections Academy Board of Trustees
David Taylor, Business Community Representative
Jerald Birmelin, Public Policy Sector Representative
Michelle Ciora, Parent Representative
Gail Hawkins-Bush, Education & Community Representative
Cheryl Lozier, Parent Representative
Paula Hearns, Parent Representative
Marcie Mulligan, Parent Representative
Each Board meeting is open to the public, including parents and the community, and includes a specific public comment period with toll-free telephone access to remove any geographic barriers to participation. Board minutes and other relevant records are public documents available upon request to any parent or community member. Please see Attachment N for the agendas of all Board meeting from the past school year.

Parents and members of the community also have multiple informal opportunities to interact face-to-face with staff members and provide input at informational meetings and events around the state. The school’s 20 Community Coordinators (see map and discussion below) provide an additional conduit for commentary and feedback. In addition, Commonwealth Connections Academy holds dozens of parent informational meetings throughout the year around the state to help families succeed in using the LMS and the school’s programs. Please see Attachment Q for detailed information about Community Coordinator activities as well as attendance sheets for parent informational meetings throughout the state.

- Describe the relationship of the Cyber Charter School with the surrounding community. Describe any complaints that have been received and how they have been investigated and resolved.

Commonwealth Connections Academy has established a unique network of Community Coordinators throughout the state to ensure positive community interactions in their local areas, from field trips to service projects to informational outreach. The Community Coordinators are parents who receive staff support to carry out their important planning and communication tasks, including a monthly newsletter and postings on dedicated school message boards. The map below shows the Community Coordinator regions:
Please see Attachment Q for a complete 2009-10 set of Community Coordinator newsletters, including a comprehensive listing of field trips and service projects all over the state of Pennsylvania.

- **Describe the mechanisms in place to measure stakeholder satisfaction and solicit input. Include copies of surveys and questions and include a summary of responses.**

While Commonwealth Connections Academy invites stakeholder comments at any time via the Feedback and StarTrak mechanisms in the LMS, the school also conducts a very extensive Parent Satisfaction Survey every year in early spring. Administered electronically by an independent market research firm, this survey has a response rate of well over 50% each year and provides structured feedback on everything from the curriculum to tech support to the field trips. The 2010 survey shows a steady increase overall parent satisfaction with Commonwealth Connections Academy: 93.9% said they would grade the school A or B, compared to 91.7% in 2009 and 90.6% in 2008. Some 96.3% also said their children were satisfied with the program (up from 94.3% in 2009) and 94.9% say they recommend the program to other families (up slightly from 94.3% in 2009). For complete Parent Satisfaction Survey results, please see Attachment R.

**B. Student Enrollment**

- **Is the enrollment stable and/or near capacity? What is the average “churn rate” for the last five years?**

Commonwealth Connections Academy has grown by more than 250% during the five years of this charter cycle (see chart below), with year-over-year growth averaging 38%. As a cyber charter, Commonwealth Connections Academy has the capacity to accommodate this level of growth by adding staff and scaling its operations – including its teaching center facilities – to match.

As shown in the chart on the next page, the school’s “churn rate” – defined as the percentage of students leaving the school during the year – has averaged 26% since 2006-07, which is actually slightly lower than the typical average of 30% among cyber schools nationally. As the chart indicates, the majority of students eligible to return to Commonwealth Connections Academy each year (excluding graduates) do so. Given the school’s strong growth, however, these returning students make up an average of just 52% of the school’s students each year. Put another way, almost half of the students at Commonwealth Connections Academy each year are experiencing the program for the first time.

- **Describe the system for maintaining accurate student enrollment and withdraw information as required under Section 1748-A, Enrollment and Notification.**

The Commonwealth Connections Academy LMS provides detailed tracking of all enrollment and withdrawal data as required under Section 1748-A. Working with the central Connections Academy enrollment and data teams, the school collects and verifies all required documentation from parents who wish to enroll their students; carefully tracks attendance of enrolled students using detailed log information entered by parents and

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5 CORRECTED PER PDE 9/20/10: Churn Rate is the Number of Withdrawals divided by the Number of Enrollments (# of Withdrawals/# of Enrollments).
verified by the school; and thoroughly documents and reports all withdrawals. Please see Attachment S for Attendance, Truancy and Withdrawal policies and procedures.

- **Describe the marketing techniques used to advertise this Cyber Charter School opportunity and how the Cyber Charter School has made resources available equitably across the state.**

Commonwealth Connections Academy uses a combination of direct mail (both physical and electronic), online advertising, traditional advertising (low-cost radio, television and community newspaper), site-based advertising (e.g., ads in movie theaters), information sessions, and word of mouth to inform families across the state about the school and the opportunity it presents for their children. Please see Attachment P for samples of outreach materials distributed equitably across the state.

- **Using the following table, provide the history of student enrollment for each year and discuss trends in student turnover and retention data.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Student Enrollment at the end of the school year (as reported to PDE Child Accounting Section)</th>
<th>Year 1: 2006-07</th>
<th>Year 2: 2007-08</th>
<th>Year 3: 2008-09</th>
<th>Year 4: 2009-10</th>
<th>This Year: 2010-11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1491</td>
<td>1948</td>
<td>2901</td>
<td>3909</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of students enrolled in June who were also enrolled in September of the previous year</th>
<th>Year 1: 2006-07</th>
<th>Year 2: 2007-08</th>
<th>Year 3: 2008-09</th>
<th>Year 4: 2009-10</th>
<th>This Year: 2010-11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1125</td>
<td>1387</td>
<td>2143</td>
<td>2950</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of students, excluding graduates, who were enrolled at the end of last year</th>
<th>Year 1: 2006-07</th>
<th>Year 2: 2007-08</th>
<th>Year 3: 2008-09</th>
<th>Year 4: 2009-10</th>
<th>This Year: 2010-11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>796</td>
<td>1040</td>
<td>1533</td>
<td>2065</td>
<td>2691*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This number will change as students continue to enroll this year, including former CCA students who decide to return after the school year is underway.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of students, excluding graduates, who were enrolled at the beginning of the school year who were also enrolled at the close of the previous school year</th>
<th>Year 1: 2006-07</th>
<th>Year 2: 2007-08</th>
<th>Year 3: 2008-09</th>
<th>Year 4: 2009-10</th>
<th>This Year: 2010-11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>771</td>
<td>1001</td>
<td>1505</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>2588</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Provide waiting list data for each year, detailing how many students were on the waiting list at the beginning of the year, how many were extended opportunities to enroll, and how many enrolled during the year.**

Commonwealth Connections Academy maintains open enrollment throughout the year and does not have a waiting list. The school has been able to accommodate all students who wish to attend.
• If the school has been under- or over-enrolled, provide an explanation.

Commonwealth Connections Academy has been neither under-enrolled nor over-enrolled.

• Drawing upon exit interviews and other sources, explain why students choose to return or not to return to the school.

For every student that withdraws from the school, Commonwealth Connections Academy captures the reported reason in the LMS, and has found the pattern of reasons to be strikingly consistent year after year. In 2009-10, for example, 41% reported an unanticipated mismatch with either the academic requirements, regulatory requirements, or family schedule; 28% decided to choose a different or better school option; 15% cited a "life change" (such as a move out of state or a job change affecting the Learning Coach); and 17% were either no-shows or withdrew before completing a minimum number of lessons. (Note that families could choose more than one answer to the question.)

Commonwealth Connections Academy together with the other Connections Academy schools around the nation are working this year to reduce the withdrawal rate by providing additional support to students and families who would clearly benefit from the program but might be facing challenges in adapting to the demands of quality cyber schooling.
C. Policies and Procedures

a. Technology and Support

- **How is technology used to provide curriculum?**

  Commonwealth Connections Academy uses technology to bring the highest quality Pennsylvania public school experience to students across the state working in the individualized learning environment that works best for them. The technology components that power the school include:

  - **Learning Management System:** The platform for organizing and managing the entire Commonwealth Connections Academy educational environment, this proprietary, secure web-based software delivers every assignment and tracks every activity (whether online or offline), monitoring completion of individual lessons as well as mastery of discrete skills and knowledge. Parents and students must access the online Learning Management System to organize, document, and interact in the learning experience, ensuring Commonwealth Connections Academy an unprecedented level of time-on-task detail.

  - **Student Technology:** Commonwealth Connections Academy ensures complete access to the curriculum by providing each family with a high-quality computer (desktop or laptop), printer, supplies, and an Internet subsidy. The school has made it a priority to provide laptops to students in grades 6 and up wherever desired. Please see details below under “hardware, software and internet connections and technical support provided.”

  - **Teacher Technology:** Commonwealth Connections Academy teachers are provided with sophisticated technology tools including computer workstations, “starboards” and webcams for conducting LiveLesson sessions, and wireless telephone headsets to facilitate voice conversations with students and Learning Coaches over the phone or through voice over IP.

  - **Mobile Classroom:** This specially outfitted recreational vehicle allows Commonwealth Connections Academy teachers to travel the state of Pennsylvania providing extra opportunities for students to participate in academic challenges, labs, and interactions.

  - **Unique Software Tools:** The Commonwealth Connections Academy curriculum is powered by cutting-edge software tools such as Teachlet tutorials (proprietary animations that introduce topics and build on prior knowledge); LiveLesson synchronous web-conferencing sessions; science simulations such as the award-winning Connections Academy online rock and mineral kit and pan balance; online calculators and the WorkPad mathematical processor; Connect-a-Majig word-building tool; and many more.

  - **iText Online Textbooks:** The Commonwealth Connections Academy curriculum integrates 21st century online versions of leading textbooks, which themselves feature extensive interactivity and hyperlinking for improved student engagement.
• **Describe the teaching methods that are used to deliver instruction and to assess academic performance. How is the Cyber Charter School improving student learning through the effective use of technology?**

The core focus of each Commonwealth Connections Academy teacher is instruction of students in the curriculum and individualization of the program to meet students’ needs. Teachers allocate their time among the following instructional activities.

• Support the instructional program with synchronous web conferencing sessions.
• Complete all grading, create report cards and conduct parent conferences in a timely manner.
• Communicate with parents, students and other teachers on a regular basis to develop and update Personal Learning Plans and schedules, score assessments, provide feedback on student work, suggest instructional approaches and strategies, monitor completion of assignments and coach special projects.
• Work collaboratively with a team of teachers to ensure that all students on the team’s caseload are successfully progressing through the program, that parents have a central point of contact, and that tasks are distributed evenly amongst the team members.
• Develop a general knowledge of the entire program’s K-12 curriculum and a very detailed knowledge of the grades for which they are responsible.
• Support students and parents with alternate strategies and provide additional assistance with daily assignments and projects.
• Communicate regularly with parents, students, and curriculum specialists via computer (including WebMail, LiveLesson session and message boards) and telephone.
• Keep student records and data up-to-date, including cumulative files, online student and family information, attendance accounting, and logging of all student and parent contacts.
• Consult with team members and staff learning specialists to develop alternate enrichment activities and modifications to students’ programs to increase student understanding.
• Communicate with parent Community Coordinators to suggest social activities and relevant field trips for students.
• Staff after school tutoring sessions.
• Manage regional field trips and make efforts to integrate trips into the curriculum.
• Devise and implement virtual methods of creating and maintaining a “school community.”
• Participate in the organization and administration of the PSSA testing, as directed.
• Participate in student recruiting sessions and other marketing efforts that require teacher representation.
• Attend field trips and other community activities implemented for families.

Unlike teachers at some other cyber charter schools, Commonwealth Connections Academy teachers are not responsible for developing courses, providing tech support, or maintaining the website. Their focus is purely and directly on instruction.
Commonwealth Connections Academy has multiple means to help the teacher monitor the student's progress, to keep parents "in the loop" with current school happenings, and to help Commonwealth Connections Academy grow and improve from parent feedback. Scheduled phone calls, LiveLesson sessions, and face-to-face meetings are all used to help teachers gauge student's mastery of concepts and to determine appropriate instructional recommendations. The student's teacher conducts follow-up conversations via parent-teacher/teacher-student conferences, the content of which is captured in the student's Log in the LMS. In the secondary model the student’s six subject teachers and homeroom teacher may rotate this responsibility among them. All student progress data is captured in the online grade book, updated in real time, and shown on the student, parent, and teacher home pages.

- **How is the “school day” defined and how is the student’s attendance for the day monitored?**

As an effective virtual school, Commonwealth Connections Academy is focused on providing each student with a personalized approach to learning which begins with a flexible school day. Commonwealth Connections Academy teachers are available live during an extended school day (Monday through Friday, 8 am to 4 pm, plus after-school tutorials hours), but students may complete their schoolwork during the hours and days that best suit them.

At the same time, the school fully complies with the state requirement of an 180-day school year. Commonwealth Connections Academy guides its participating families in understanding that complying with state requirement means that students in grades K – 6 must complete 900 hours of instruction by the end of the year, logging an average of 5 hours per day or 25 hours per week, while students in grades 7 – 12 must complete 990 hours, an average 5.5 hours per day or 28 hours per week. In addition to completing the minimum annual days and hours, students are responsible for mastering all material, which may require additional time.

To ensure that students are meeting the required days of instruction, Learning Coaches must document student attendance in the Learning Management System and the school verifies that the attendance records are accurate based on participation and completion of work. For each instructional day, Learning Coaches enter a 0 – 9 in the LMS to indicate the number of hours of schooling that occurred, aiming to meet the recommended weekly hours of schooling. If a student is absent, the Learning Coach must send information to the school about the absence, and the school determines if the absence can be classified as excused.

Student attendance is monitored closely through the Escalation System, with proactive intervention by teachers and school administrators for students that fall behind. Please see below and Attachment S for the complete attendance and truancy policies, and Attachment T for relevant communications forms.

- **How does the Cyber Charter School verify the authenticity of a student’s work and how are exams proctored?**

Commonwealth Connections Academy has multiple mechanisms in place to ensure academic integrity and the authenticity of student work, from a Student Honor Code to proctoring of key exams. The following protections against plagiarism and cheating have proven very effective for Commonwealth Connections Academy.
**Student Honor Code:** All Commonwealth Connections Academy students (as well as parents of elementary students) are asked to review and agree to the Honor Code included in the School Handbook (see Attachment V). Among other responsibilities, the Honor Code calls upon each student to concur with the following:

I agree that I will...

- never submit work of any kind that is not my own, nor ever give my work to other students to submit as their own.
- never post exam or quiz answers on the Internet or in other public places, nor use answers from posted exams or quizzes.
- never provide a forged document or signature to the School.
- never plagiarize in written, oral, or creative work.
- be well-informed about plagiarism and not use “lack of knowledge” as a reason for engaging in plagiarism.
- take assessments only after I have completed the lessons leading up to that test or quiz.
- never give or receive unauthorized assistance on assessments. I understand that all assessments are “closed-book” and that my Learning Coach shall not provide assistance in determining answers on assessments.

Students in grades six and up are required to sign the Honor Code upon enrollment in Commonwealth Connections Academy.

**Parent/Caretaker Responsibilities:** Assessment security at Connections Academy begins with a signed acknowledgment of responsibilities by the parents/legal guardians and any other adults designated by the parents to support the student’s learning. These responsibilities include following the school’s rules about cheating and ensuring ongoing academic integrity. In addition, parents/caretakers have unique user names and passwords that are different from those provided to the student to ensure proper access to online assessments.

**Curriculum-Based Assessments:** Curriculum-based assessments (CBAs) are a quick and effective way of gathering formative information on students’ understanding of concepts. The mandatory regularly scheduled phone conversations between the teacher and student offer a valuable opportunity to conduct these assessments. Teachers conduct two types of CBAs: verification curriculum-based Assessment (VCBA) or diagnostic curriculum-based assessment (DCBA). VCBA are implemented at all grade levels to gauge authentic student learning of concepts previously graded as successfully completed with scores of B or higher. This contact helps teachers determine whether students fully understood a specific concept, completed their assignment in a cursory manner, or received inappropriate assistance in completing the work. Such insight allows the teacher to make informed decisions in assigning follow-up work, making instructional recommendations to the student and parent/caretaker, in determining future educational programming, or in establishing whether referral to further disciplinary action is warranted.

The teacher prepares for the VCBA by being familiar with the students’ recently completed lessons, assessment, and portfolio work. A minimum of five questions, focused on one core
course, are prepared that will help ascertain a student’s aptitude for the taught concepts. Follow-up questions are encouraged based on the student’s responses. Targeted concepts are based on a specific assignment submitted to the teacher that has been completed with a grade of B or higher. Questions are varied between explicit and implicit, and direct and explanatory, but are delivered conversationally. Question types are age and grade appropriate. The student is not notified of the questions prior to the phone call nor asked to prepare. The VCBA is designed to last approximately ten minutes.

The VCBA is recorded in the Student Log with a percent accuracy score based on the five questions. For a student scoring 60% or greater on the VCBA, the score and relevant comments are noted in the log notes. For a student who scores less than 60% correct (more than two out of five questions wrong or no response) performance is noted in the Student Log using the Instructional / Unverified VCBA area and category. Two consecutive unsatisfactory VCBAs require a direct conversation with the parent/caretaker about how the student is completing work and recommendations for how the parent/caretaker can support the student’s learning of the concepts. Suggested recommendations are documented in the log and subsequent conversations refer back to these strategies. If the VCBA is successful, the teacher records this in the Student Log using the Instructional / Verified VCBA area and category. After each phone conversation, the teacher records the results of the conversation in the Student Log.

**TurnItIn.com:** Students using the electronic drop box for written assignments are required to submit this work through TurnItIn.com, and online plagiarism detection tool.

**Assessment Diversity:** In addition to CBAs, the Commonwealth Connections Academy curriculum includes many different kinds of assignments and assessments that allow teachers to gauge students’ academic integrity through multiple views and checkpoints into the student’s skills and abilities. For example, before school starts, the teacher conducts telephone interviews with the parent and student to develop a solid baseline against which to compare online assessments. Students submit portfolio work products for in-depth review by the teacher. Regular embedded assessments such as online quizzes, tests, and checks for understanding are balanced by unit assessments that may take the form of essays or projects. Real-time interaction with the teacher via phone or LiveLesson provides multiple opportunities for informal checks beyond the CBAs. Finally, all state standardized tests are administered in face-to-face, proctored settings.

**Teacher Monitoring:** Commonwealth Connections Academy teachers are trained to be alert for any signs that a student’s work may not be his or her own. Teachers watch for mismatches between mastery indicated by a student’s online assignments and that of portfolio work in the student’s own handwriting or answers to question in a telephone conference.

**Intervention and Consequences:** Specific consequences for breaches of academic integrity are laid out in the School Handbook shown in Attachments V and W. Students and parents who are suspected of inappropriate assessment behavior or of breaches of academic integrity are confronted immediately and subjected to standard disciplinary action. Teachers intervene with the student’s parents, establish a routine of additional real-time assessments between the student and the teacher, and if needed, require proctoring of key tests. Disciplinary action against the student, up to and including suspension or expulsion, can be a consequence of repeated or sustained breaches.
• Describe the system for maintaining school records and disseminating information as required under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

Commonwealth Connections Academy complies fully with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), a federal law that affords parents and students certain rights with respect to the student’s educational records, including assurance that such data are safeguarded and not shared with unauthorized parties without the family’s permission. Students and families are apprised of their FERPA rights during the enrollment process and have ubiquitous access the FERPA policy from the school’s log-on page.

In addition, Commonwealth Connections Academy observes all other records retention and confidentiality procedures required by the State of Pennsylvania provided these do not conflict with FERPA. To safeguard confidential student data, Commonwealth Connections Academy maintains physical records in secure, fireproof cabinets in the Harrisburg administrative offices, while online data is protected by the security measures that Connections Academy has in place for its LMS.

The Connections Academy LMS has a sophisticated mechanism for providing multiple levels of permissions to effectively accommodate many different kinds of users while ensuring system and data security. The LMS was engineered to allow the System Administrator to readily create a multitude of “roles” (which already include students, parents and guardians, teachers, school administrators, support staff and authorized partners) with specific permissions (also readily adjustable by the Connections Academy’s authorized System Administrator) for accessing, viewing, and interacting with various aspects of the system.

• How is technical support provided to students and parents (i.e. during what times of the day; how is it provided, etc.)?

Commonwealth Connections Academy students and families have access to extensive tech support (and a wide range of other support services) both through online Help (always available in the LMS) and live help via Connections Academy Support Services. In addition, Commonwealth Connections Academy has its own in-house Technology Assistants to help expedite tech support for staff and families.

**Online Help** is accessible anywhere in the LMS through a click on the question mark icon, and provides a very robust array of answers and guidance. The online Help interface is shown here.

**Connections Academy Support Services**, based within Connections Academy’s headquarters in Baltimore, can be reached by calling 1-800-382-6010 then selecting the appropriate menu selection for Support Services, by e-mailing support@connectionsacademy.com, or by using the WebMail message feature in the Learning Management System and sending a message to “Support Services” (included in
the WebMail address book under Parent and Student Services). The Support Services Team is available during the school’s calendar year from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. eastern time. Voicemail messages can be left for Support Services at any time. The Support Services Team can be called for the following reasons:

- Equipment or materials supplied by Connections Academy do not match the items listed on the packing list.
- A user cannot log in to the LMS.
- Equipment, software, or materials supplied by Connections Academy do not function or have been damaged or lost (be sure to check any training resources or the Online Help section of the LMS first).
- A request needs to be made to transfer equipment or materials to another location.
- A request needs to be made to authorize the installation of hardware or software on equipment supplied by the school.

The Support Services representatives’ response times depend on the severity of the issue. The support representative will determine the problem’s severity based on the guidelines set forth below. Please note that these time frames are targeted service request response times and not resolution times.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Severity Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Preferred Contact Method</th>
<th>Response Times</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urgent</td>
<td>Outage or significant impact threatening future productivity. Very difficult to work around; system is somewhat usable.</td>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>Immediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Problem impact is high. Production is proceeding but in an impaired fashion. Workarounds are available.</td>
<td>Phone or e-mail</td>
<td>4–24 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Urgent</td>
<td>Issue does not have significant current productivity impact. Examples include product enhancements, usage questions, and cosmetic problems.</td>
<td>E-mail or feedback</td>
<td>Within 24 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Describe the hardware, software and internet connections and technical support provided.

Commonwealth Connections Academy families receive the following:

- **One desktop computer and flat-screen monitor per student in grades K–5.** The desktop system includes:
  - Hardware
    - Hewlett Packard® desktop
    - Intel® Processor, 3.06 GHz or better
    - 512MB DDRAM
    - 80GB Hard Drive
    - Integrated Graphics and Sound
- 1.44mb Floppy Disk Drive
- 48X CD-ROM or better
- Integrated 10/100 Networking
- 4 USB Interfaces
- V 90 56k Modem
- Standard PS/2 Keyboard
- 2-button PS/2 Scroll Mouse
- 17” Color CRT or Flat Screen Monitor

**Software**
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Professional
- Microsoft Office 2003®
- Trend Micro® AntiVirus
- Ad-Aware® SE Anti-spyware protection
- Other software installed includes: Adobe Acrobat Reader®, Flash® Player, Shockwave® Player, and Windows Media® Player
- CyberSitter® Internet filtering software is available upon request

**Extras**
- Headset/Microphone combo
- Unlimited Technical Support

**One laptop computer per student in grades 6 and above.** The laptop system includes:

**Hardware**
- HP Compaq Business Notebook 6715b
- AMD Turion™ X2 processor
- 15-inch TFT XGA display
- 1GB 667MHz DDR2 (1 DIMM)
- 80GB Hard drive
- 24X DVD/CDRW (fixed)
- 56K modem
- 10/100/1000 NIC
- Broadcom® 802.11 a/b/g Wireless
- Bluetooth®
- 3 USB 2.0
- Headphone/line out

**Software**
- Microsoft Windows XP Professional
- Microsoft Office 2003
- Trend Micro AntiVirus
- Ad-Aware SE Anti-spyware protection
- Other software installed includes: Adobe Acrobat Reader, Flash Player, Shockwave Player, and Windows Media Player
- CyberSitter® Internet filtering software is available upon request

**Extras**
- Headset/Microphone combo
- Unlimited Technical Support

**One color printer per household.** The HP Color Deskjet printer comes with one ink cartridge, provided the first year of enrollment. Each student receives one ink cartridge...
each year. One additional cartridge per student may be requested. Supporting
documentation may be required if additional cartridges are needed to complete school
work.

- **Subsidy for Internet service.** Each household with dial-up service receives $50.85 paid
  three times a year. Each household with broadband service (e.g. cable, DSL, or satellite
  Internet service) receives $120 paid three times a year. Payments are made during the
  first week of December, the first week of March, and the first week of June.

- If “spyware” is used on student computers describe the type of spyware used and
  explain the purpose of the use.

  No “spyware” is included on student computers, and the computers come with robust
  protection against viruses, spyware and other malware. Connections Academy Tech
  Support can access these computers remotely but only with the active permission of the
  user during a tech support session.

- **Does the Cyber Charter School have a written policy on cyber bullying and how is the
  policy made known to parents and students?**

  Commonwealth Connections Academy’s behavior and discipline policies as articulated in
  the School Handbook (see Attachments V and W) have always included a prohibition on
  bullying and harassment as offenses warranting at least suspension. The School Handbook
  specifically warns that suspension or expulsion may result from the following:

  - **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.

  Parents and students are required to acknowledge and agree to all policies in the School
  Handbook as part of the enrollment process.

b. **Truancy Policies**

- **Describe the Cyber Charter School’s Policy on Truancy. What constitutes truancy
  (number of days not attending; number of days inactive?) When are parents contacted?
  How is contact made (phone call, email, home visit, etc.)? Attach copies of all forms
  used.**

  The Commonwealth Connections Academy LMS closely tracks and reports ongoing student
  attendance progress based on the objective numeric data generated by the LMS including
  recorded attendance, student contact with Commonwealth Connections Academy teachers,
  time-on-task, and completion of lessons and assessments. 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 problems.

When a student is in the Approaching Alarm status, he or she is in danger of being withdrawn. The school will work with the family to help get the student’s attendance back on track. If the school’s repeated efforts fail, the student will be escalated to the Alarm status which could quickly lead to the student’s official disenrollment.

See Attachment S for complete truancy policy, and Attachment T for truancy communications forms.

- Explain in detail the process and procedures the Cyber Charter School uses to notify a student’s school district of residence of a student’s truancy. How often has the Cyber Charter School provided such notification to resident school districts in the previous school year? Attach copies of all forms used.

Commonwealth Connections Academy uses a written notification system to advise the student’s district of residency regarding withdrawal (for truancy or other reasons). See Attachment T for truancy communications forms. During the 2009-10 school year, the school districts of approximately 1,000 withdrawing students.

- Provide a copy of the Cyber Charter School’s policies and procedures regarding attendance, truancy and withdrawal.

Please see Attachment S for Commonwealth Connections Academy’s policies and procedures regarding attendance, truancy and withdrawal.

c. Extracurricular Activities

- Does the Cyber Charter School maintain any agreements with local school districts regarding participation of cyber charter school students in extracurricular activities? If so, please explain the agreement(s)?

Commonwealth Connections Academy is always willing to develop agreements with local school districts to ensure access by its students to district extracurricular activities. During the 2009-10 school year, no districts have chosen to enter into formal agreements.

- Does the Cyber Charter School host any social events for enrolled students? If so, explain. Are they available to all students?

Commonwealth Connections Academy hosts hundreds of social events and educational field trips for students throughout the state, organized by regional parent Community Coordinators and available to all students. Please see the table of sample events from 2009-10 on the next page, plus complete information about Community Coordinator activities and other events in Attachment Q.

A student activities fund supported by Connections Academy based on enrollment referrals ensures that any minimal cost of participating in these activities is defrayed for students in need.

In addition to these many face-to-face social activities, Commonwealth Connections Academy offers a wide array of online Clubs and Activities for students of all ages. A list of the 2010-11 Clubs and Activities follows the Community Coordinator sample events listing.
SAMPLE SOCIAL EVENTS AND FIELD TRIPS, 2009-10

Bowling—Cedar Lanes
Wendell August Forge Tour
Frog Hill Mountain Puppeteers
National Aviary
Fall Indian/Pilgrim Project—Ben Frank
A Christmas Carol—Movie
Tour of the State Capitol
Bowl Arena
Felt Making Workshop
Lost River Caverns
Fall Bowling Party—Phoenix Lanes
Family Roller Skate
Science Lab—Meadville
Alpaca Farm—Bent Pines
Sunbury Broadcasting Corp
Fall Craft Day
Use the Force: Live Science Show
Pottery Class
Callies Candy Kitchen & Pretzel Factory Tour
Pizza & Movie
Corning Museum of Glass
Ice Festival
I'll Get in Trouble @ CCA
Trial of Ebenezer Scrooge Play
Corette America
Merry Christmas George Bailey
Erie Art Museum
Cornwell Furnace Tour
A Dickens of a Christmas
Nutcracker-Youth Ballet
A Christmas Doll
Christkindl Market
Winter Swim Break Party
PA State Museum
Olympic Fun Center—Holiday Party
Lyrical Christmas Carol
YMCA Swim Safety Program
Tiny Tim’s Christmas Carol
Miracle on Easy Street Play
Pottsgrove Manor Tour & Family Brunch
Lehigh Gorge Train
Wood Star Marking—Ben Frank
Bowling: Lincoln Lanes
Ashers Candy
Frog Dissection: Traveling Lab
PicassoLine Drawing/Painting Studio
Bowling: Maplewood Lanes
Study Skills Workshop
BCCC: Succup Theater Night at the Theater
Elizabethtown Public Library
Reptiles & Amphibians of NEPA
Chinese New Year & Mural Arts Walking Tour

Ski/Boarding @ Jack Frost
Laserdome
Johnstown Children’s Museum
PETCO: Fun, Fur, & Feathers
Pitts Zoo & Aquarium
High School Musical: Allenberry Playhouse
Blood Drive
Shakespeare’s Hamlet: Bloomsburg Theater
Seven Springs Tubing/Skiing
Olympic Fun Center
Card Workshop
Snowtubing@ Fernwood
Ski Roundtop
W-B/Scanton Penguins Hockey Game
Take Care Clinic @ Walgreen’s
Weather Discovery
Barnes & Noble
Crayola Crayon Factory
Palmer Museum of Art
YMCA Youth & Government Debate Practice
Maple Sugaring—PPL Montour Preserve
Traveling Lab: University of Scranton
Go Green! Ben Frank
Eldred WWII Museum
Heinz History Center
Giant Foods Healthy Kids
Grapes of Wrath
Volunteer w/ a Teacher: Clothing Bank
Whitaker Center
Traveling Lab: Neidig-Garber Science Center
Card Workshop
YMCA Youth & Government Debate Practice
Giant Kid Healthy Ideas
Card Workshop
Bradford Co. Conservation Office: Indoor Event
Int’l Culture Day Competition: Lebanon Valley College
Nixon Park
Nolde Forest Env Ctr: CSI in the Outdoors
Little Mermaid Play: Arcadia Theater
Thiel College Tour for HS Students
Giant Kid Healthy Ideas
Cook Forest
Naeskahonitown Indian Village
Chocolate Making
Basket/Bucket Making: Ben Frank
Harrisburg Symphony Orchestra
Student vs. Staff Basketball Game & Hoops of Hope
Roller Skating: Ozzy’s Family Fun Center
Scholastic Book Fair
Tom Ridge Environment Center
End of Year Picnic: Hershey Park
End of Year Picnic: Kennywood
SAMPLE ONLINE CLUBS AND ACTIVITIES

- **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.

- **Environmental Club:** Students exchange ideas about ways to keep our planet clean and discuss such global issues as alternative energy, trash collection and recycling, and allocating limited resources. Students are encouraged to take what they learn to their local community.

- **First in Math®:** Working at their own pace, students play interactive games on the *First in Math* website, reinforcing a wide range of skills. Students take part in a national competition by earning points while they master key concepts.

- **Robotics Club:** First working individually to learn how robots are built and controlled, students move to group challenges where they cooperate with one another to make a robot successfully complete a task.

- **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.

- **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.

- **Student Literary Magazine:** The Pens and Lens literary magazine recognizes and publishes original student work. Students are encouraged to use their unique artistic expression in
both written and photographic forms and inspire their fellow students in this monthly publication.

- **Student Newspaper**: A student-managed newspaper team, including reporters and a staff, publish a monthly newspaper, The Monitor. Students learn group dynamics, organization strategies, and team-building exercise as they research and write stories on current events, sports, entertainment, and fashion.

- **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.

d. **School Safety**

- **Please attach a copy of your School Safety Plan.**
  Please see Attachment U for School Safety Plan.

- **Describe the Cyber Charter School’s student assistance programs (SAP). Include in the discussion information about agreements with county agencies to provide mental health and drug abuse counseling, when necessary.**

  Commonwealth Connections Academy’s Student Assistance Program (SAP) is a voluntary, systematic intervention process for students at risk by a team of trained, professional school personnel and community agency liaisons. The mission of SAP is to identify, intervene, refer, and monitor students having school related problems because of alcohol, drug, and/or mental health issues, and other barriers to learning, while the primary goal is to help students overcome those barriers in order that they may be more successful academically.

  The core of the program is the Student Assistance Team comprised of teachers, administrators, school counselor, school nurse, and outside consultants trained to work with students. The Student Assistance Team receives referrals from parents, students, teachers, administrators, and other concerned school personnel. Referrals are made by contacting any member of the SAP team, and students can refer themselves.

  After receiving a referral, team members gather information from other staff members who have had contact with the student. An informal team meeting is convened to determine the status of the referral. Parents are then contacted and asked to provide written consent before SAP services are initiated, and if consent is given, parents will be asked to provide similar information on the child. Parents or a student can decline participation in SAP at any time – the program is voluntary. After compiling all information provided, the SAP team will then determine if recommendations for further services is necessary. The recommendations could be a conference with a SAP member or a request for an assessment provided by a trained specialist from a county drug and alcohol or mental health agency. These specialists work with the team members to recommend appropriate action for that individual student. The team monitors and provides support for the student throughout the process.

  The SAP program also provides briefings and information for the entire school community about issues such as substance abuse and suicide prevention.
The SAP Team is committed to the utmost confidentiality in all aspects of the intervention process. Matters brought before the team will not be shared outside of the team, unless there is a professional/parental need to know. Parent permission is obtained before any student is interviewed by a team member. In situations where the health, safety, or welfare of a child is at risk, the SAP team is obligated to notify proper authorities.

- **Describe the Cyber Charter School’s expectations for student behavior and discipline. Explain how the Cyber Charter School’s discipline policy complies with Chapter 12 of the Pennsylvania Education Regulations, Title 22, particularly with respect to due process for students.**

  Appropriate conduct is expected of all students at the school. School students are guaranteed due process of law as required by the 14th Amendment to the Constitution. The student’s code of conduct is explained in the School Handbook (see Attachments V and W) which also includes steps to be followed in the event of misbehavior. All of Chapter 12 regulations are followed in the discipline policy.

- **Provide a copy of the Student Handbook and/or other materials that are used to detail behavior and consequence for students.**

  Please see Attachments V and W for the School Handbook, which fully details expected behaviors and consequences for violations of those expectations. Every Learning Coach enrolling a student in the program must confirm with a signature that she/he has reviewed the handbook with the student.

- **Discuss the Cyber Charter School’s suspension/expulsion history. Describe the interventions/processes put into place to reduce the numbers of suspensions and expulsions to affect this progress. If there are concerns regarding suspensions/expulsions, describe the steps/adjustments being made to address these concerns.**

  For 2009-2010, Commonwealth Connections Academy suspended one student; no students were expelled.
V. Plans for the Future

- What is the proposed school design for the next five years, if the charter is renewed?
  
  - Discuss whether the Cyber Charter School is proposing any curriculum changes, new academic emphases, etc. Articulate any grade and/or enrollment expansion requests. Provide additional curriculum content area descriptions and goals for the new grades, and discuss how the proposed expansion impacts the overall mission and educational design of the current charter. How will the Cyber Charter School accommodate additional students?

  Commonwealth Connections Academy intends to devote the next charter cycle to building upon its strong curricular and instructional foundation to provide a cyber charter model that produces outstanding results not just for most students but for all students. The Board of Trustees and the school administration together have made a focused commitment to achieving AYP at the school’s next opportunity. Fulfilling this commitment will require making deeper and smarter use of assessment data and fleshing out our repertoire of intervention and enrichment tools. It will mean leveraging the expanded footprint that our regional teaching centers and our mobile classroom provide to bring our staff closer to the families we serve. It will mean arming our teachers to think creatively about winning academic success for their most persistently struggling students, while creating new opportunities for all of our students to flourish in the 21st century.

  While we even further sharpen our focus on academic success, Commonwealth Connections Academy will not lose sight of its two other guiding principles: customer satisfaction and responsible enrollment growth. We are very proud to have achieved an increase in parent satisfaction during this period of rapid growth since the last charter renewal, but understand that to maintain that high satisfaction level will require careful attention to the factors we know matter most: helpful, responsive teaching staff, an engaging learning experience, and a strong school community. Commonwealth Connections Academy will ensure that these strengths remain in sight while we press for improved academic performance.

  We also want Commonwealth Connections Academy to continue its growth as the “go to” option for families who want a high-quality, highly accountable cyber school experience. While public understanding of cyber-schooling has certainly increased since our school was founded in 2003, there are still many families who could benefit from virtual education who do not yet know it exists. For the next charter period, Commonwealth Connections Academy plans to continue its expansive outreach activities with an eye to sustained enrollment growth.

  Also to this end, the Commonwealth Connections Academy Board of Trustees has expressed interest in beginning to explore the addition of pre-kindergarten (for four-year-olds) to the grade range served by the school. The Board has directed administration to research this possibility for implementation in school year 2012-13 at the earliest. The “Proposed Grades/Enrollment Configuration” discussion below reflects this tentative possibility.
Discuss and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the Cyber Charter School’s program over the previous three to four years and explain how that information will be used in future plans. Be specific about how those plans build on feedback and input from parents, teachers, and students.

Over the past several years, Commonwealth Connections Academy has demonstrated the following strengths:

- Its ability to satisfy parents and students (as evidenced by satisfaction ratings above 91% on annual surveys, rising to 93% in 2009-10);
- Its responsiveness to stakeholder needs, as evidenced by the expanding Community Coordinator program (see below), revision of all curriculum grades K-12, and the forecasted establishment of the Williamsport, Scranton, and expanded Pittsburgh and Philadelphia locations;
- Its ability to attract and retain high-quality teachers;
- Its success in implementing programs to improve PSSA scores despite a mobile student population and higher percentage of low-income and IEP students than the state as a whole; and
- Its ability to accommodate individual learning styles and improve achievement of all students through the use of each student’s Personalized Learning Plan (PLP).

Commonwealth Connections Academy implements evidence-based instructional techniques and strategies; provides on-line tutorial and instructional sessions for students and Learning Coaches; provides students identified as basic or below basic with remedial programs directed towards mastery of eligible content; implements programs to support learning coaches and parents.

Commonwealth Connections Academy’s weaknesses are clustered around PSSA performance in specific subgroups. In particular, the Commonwealth Connections Academy subgroup of IEP students across all grade levels needs more support and intervention on essential content and anchors in both reading and math. The school has made a focused commitment to successfully addressing this challenge in the coming school year and beyond.

• How will stakeholder involvement be enhanced in the next five years?

- Discuss the plans for parent, student, and teacher involvement. Be specific in describing how these plans are informed by experiences of the past three to four years.

Commonwealth Connections Academy has built an exceptionally robust network of Community Coordinators to facilitate field trips, social activities, community projects and other aspects of our vibrant school community. The school now plans to build on its strengths in this area by expanding the number of Community Coordinators to 50, ensuring additional representation for each region.
o Describe how stakeholder (parent, student, and teacher) input and satisfaction will be measured in the future. Discuss how the Cyber Charter School leadership and administration will utilize input and feedback from the stakeholders for program involvement.

Commonwealth Connections Academy will continue with its proven-successful annual Parent Satisfaction Survey and Employee Satisfaction Survey processes, which have delivered excellent response rates and provided key, actionable data. The very popular StarTrak lesson rating system will also be maintained and promoted. Expanding on these, the school will explore additional methods for gathering feedback directly from students, and capturing deeper insights from parents on curriculum through a standing Curriculum Advisory Council.

• Report the Cyber Charter School’s student enrollment plans for the next five years using the following table. Include any requested grade/enrollment expansions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Current Status</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
<th>Year 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Projected</td>
<td>4,800 FTE</td>
<td>5,800</td>
<td>7,000</td>
<td>8,300</td>
<td>9,900</td>
<td>11,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment</td>
<td></td>
<td>FTE</td>
<td>FTE</td>
<td>FTE</td>
<td>FTE</td>
<td>FTE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades to be</td>
<td>Grades K-12</td>
<td>Grades K-12</td>
<td>Grades PreK*-12</td>
<td>Grades PreK*-12</td>
<td>Grades PreK*-12</td>
<td>Grades PreK*-12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Offered</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

* Addition of Pre-K tentative; Board of Trustees has authorized exploration only.

• What measurable outcomes will the Cyber Charter School achieve over the next five years?

o Use the chart below to respond to academic goals listed and the empty rows to insert your own academic and non-academic goals. Be sure to include goals for any new grades being proposed.

Please see chart of measurable outcomes beginning on the next page.
### Goals for Future Planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Current Status</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
<th>Year 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local test data goals for all grades tested:</strong> Based on a value-added model of academic growth, each student will demonstrate a year of academic growth for a year in school for students in grades K-8. Measurement: The school will administer its Longitudinal Evaluation of Academic Progress (LEAP) assessment at the beginning and end of each year.</td>
<td></td>
<td>At least 85% of students who take the pre and post test will make satisfactory progress in Math and Reading.</td>
<td>At least 86%</td>
<td>At least 87%</td>
<td>At least 88%</td>
<td>At least 89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PSSA goals for all grades tested:</strong> CCA students will meet or exceed statewide performance targets in reading and math for all tested grades, 3-8 and 11.</td>
<td>Reading: 63%; Math: 56%</td>
<td>Reading: 72%; Math 67% (According to AYP and PDE, subject to change along with PDE requirements)</td>
<td>Reading: 81%; Math 78% (According to AYP and PDE, subject to change along with PDE requirements)</td>
<td>Reading: 91%; Math 89% (According to AYP and PDE, subject to change along with PDE requirements)</td>
<td>Reading: 100%, Math 100% (According to AYP and PDE, subject to change along with PDE requirements)</td>
<td>Reading: 100%, Math 100% (According to AYP and PDE, subject to change along with PDE requirements)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### No Child Left Behind AYP goals: CCA will make AYP for all areas including attendance, participation in state testing, performance in state testing, and graduation rate.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facet</th>
<th>AYP achieved</th>
<th>AYP in all tested subgroups</th>
<th>AYP in all tested subgroups</th>
<th>AYP in all tested subgroups</th>
<th>AYP in all tested subgroups</th>
<th>AYP in all tested subgroups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in 22 out of 25 subgroups; Attendance: at least 90%; Participation at least 95%; Graduation rate: at least 85%</td>
<td>Attendance: at least 90%; Participation at least 95%; Graduation rate: at least 85%</td>
<td>Attendance: at least 90%; Participation at least 95%; Graduation rate: at least 85%</td>
<td>Attendance: at least 90%; Participation at least 95%; Graduation rate: at least 85%</td>
<td>Attendance: at least 90%; Participation at least 95%; Graduation rate: at least 85%</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CCA will continue to grow enrollment, aiming toward total student population of nearly 12,000 students by the end of the new charter cycle. The school will also explore expanding its grade range to include pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade beginning in the 2012-13 school year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facet</th>
<th>4,800 FTE, grades K-12</th>
<th>5,800 FTE, grades K-12</th>
<th>7,000 FTE, grades PreK*-12</th>
<th>8,300 FTE, grades PreK*-12</th>
<th>9,900 FTE, grades PreK*-12</th>
<th>11,900 FTE, grades PreK*-12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* tentative</td>
<td>* tentative</td>
<td>* tentative</td>
<td>* tentative</td>
<td>* tentative</td>
<td>* tentative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Faculty rated exemplary or proficient each school year will return at a rate of at least 95%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facet</th>
<th>At least 95%</th>
<th>At least 95%</th>
<th>At least 95%</th>
<th>At least 95%</th>
<th>At least 95%</th>
<th>At least 95%</th>
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</thead>
</table>

CCA will maintain and improve overall parent satisfaction with the program. On the Parent Satisfaction Survey, the Parent Perception of Overall Program Quality will be at or above 3.4, and the participation rate must be above 60%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facet</th>
<th>CCA will be above 3.4; and the participation rate will be above: 60%</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Commonwealth Connections Academy Cyber Charter Renewal 59
Complete the following ONLY if the Cyber Charter School plans to add grades at the time of this Application.

- **Describe the plan for serving additional grades.**
  The Commonwealth Connections Academy Board of Trustees has authorized school leadership to begin exploring the possibility of adding Pre-Kindergarten to the school’s program for 2012-13 at the earliest.

- **Detail the changes from your current enrollment and grade levels, as follows:**
  Please see Projected Enrollment chart in preceding section. If implemented, Pre-Kindergarten enrollment is anticipated to be less than 3% of the school’s total student enrollment in any given year.

- **What is the plan for recruiting a sufficient number of teachers holding appropriate certification to serve the additional grades/enrollment proposed?**
  If Commonwealth Connections Academy determines after exploration to proceed with development of Pre-Kindergarten, the school will recruit teachers with appropriate certification to serve these grades.

- **What is the current student-to-teacher ratio? Does the Applicant consider this ratio adequate? Explain why or why not.**
  The current student to teacher ratio is 27 to 1, which Commonwealth Connections Academy considers sufficient.

- **Describe the Cyber Charter School’s plans for professional development to help teachers acquire the skills and knowledge needed to serve the student population. Include any new skills necessary to serve proposed additional grades/enrollment.**
  If Commonwealth Connections Academy determines after exploration to proceed with development of Pre-Kindergarten, the school provide a professional development program for teachers of this grade that meets the standards of quality established for our current professional development program.

- **Will the current facility meet the needs of the Cyber Charter School for the next five years? If not, what are the plans for moving to another facility? How does this facility meet the needs of the school? Include valid certificates of occupancy for all new sites, if applicable.**
  The current/planned Commonwealth Connections Academy facilities described in the preceding pages of the application are sufficient to meet the school’s needs, including the possible addition of Pre-Kindergarten.
Cyber Charter School Charter Renewal Application
Signature Page

We, the undersigned, have reviewed and approve the submission of this Cyber Charter School Renewal Application to the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

Chief Executive Officer

President, Board of Trustees

Secretary, Board of Trustees

9/30/2010 Date

9/30/2010 Date

9/30/2010 Date
## Attachments

**INCLUDES PDE-REQUIRED ATTACHMENTS PLUS ADDITIONAL ATTACHMENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attachment #</th>
<th>Referenced Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cover</td>
<td>Instructions</td>
<td>Summary letter from CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cover</td>
<td>Application Fact Sheet</td>
<td>See Attachment K for Any Leases, Deeds, or Real Estate Agreements not Previously Submitted to the Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page 61</td>
<td>Signature Sheet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Student Achievement</td>
<td>PSSA Report for Previous Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Student Achievement</td>
<td>Random Sample of Lesson Plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Student Achievement</td>
<td>Evidence of Alignment</td>
</tr>
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<td>D</td>
<td>Student Achievement</td>
<td>Copy of the School Calendar</td>
</tr>
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<td>E</td>
<td>Student Achievement</td>
<td>Copy of the School Improvement Plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page 20</td>
<td>School Operations and Management</td>
<td>Teacher Turnover Chart</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
<td>School Operations and Management</td>
<td>Union Contracts with Professional Employees, if applicable</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>School Operations and Management</td>
<td>Certification Level Chart</td>
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<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>School Operations and Management</td>
<td>Board-Adopted Fiscal Policies and Procedures</td>
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<tr>
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<td>School Operations and Management</td>
<td>Most Recent Financial Statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>School Operations and Management</td>
<td>Annual Audits for Each Year of the Charter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Page 30</td>
<td>School Operations and Management</td>
<td>Investments Chart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>School Operations and Management</td>
<td>Auditor General Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
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<td>Any Leases, Deeds, or Real Estate Agreements Not Previously Submitted to the Department</td>
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<td>L</td>
<td>School Operations and Management</td>
<td>Certificates of Occupancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page 32</td>
<td>School Operations and Management</td>
<td>List of Board Members who have served since the last renewal, the dates they served and in what capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School Operations and Management</td>
<td>Copies of Signed Ethics Forms (as required by the State Ethics Commission) for each Board Member currently serving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>School Operations and Management</td>
<td>Agenda for every board meeting held within the last school year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>School Operations and Management</td>
<td>Evaluations of the External Management Organization (EMO), if applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Overall School Design</td>
<td>Examples of Communication, Outreach and Marketing to the Community and Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Overall School Design</td>
<td>Agendas and Sign-in Sheets from Parent and/or Community Events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>Overall School Design</td>
<td>Surveys and Response Summaries Conducted by the School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Page 39 Overall School Design</td>
<td>Enrollment Chart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Overall School Design</td>
<td>Policy for Attendance, Truancy and Withdrawal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Overall School Design</td>
<td>Copies of all forms used for Truancy Communications to parents, resident school district, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td>Overall School Design</td>
<td>School Safety Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Overall School Design</td>
<td>Student Handbook Part 1: General Portion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>Overall School Design</td>
<td>Student Handbook Part 2: Commonwealth Connections Academy Specific Portion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Page 57 Plans for the Future</td>
<td>Projected Enrollment Chart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Page 58 Plans for the Future</td>
<td>Measurable Outcomes and Goals Chart</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Page 60 Plans for the Future</td>
<td>Enrollment Charts by Grade Only if the school is requesting to increase the number of grades served.</td>
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</table>