

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

In Re: Commonwealth Connections Academy Cyber Charter
Cyber Charter School Renewal

July 27, 2011

Background

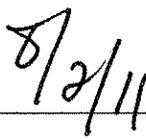
Amendments to the Charter School Law (“CSL”), 24 P.S. §§17-1701-A – 17-1751-A, that became effective July 1, 2002, include new Subchapter (c), which sets forth new provisions for the establishment and oversight of cyber charter schools. *See*, Act of June 29, 2002, No. 88, §14, adding 24 P.S. §§17-1741-A to 17-1751-A (“Act 88”). Pursuant to Act 88, the Department of Education (the “Department”) has the authority and responsibility to renew or not renew the charter of a charter school that provides instruction through the Internet or other electronic means and was approved under section 1717-A or 1718-A of the CSL. 24 P.S. §1741-A (a)(2). The Department shall revoke or deny renewal of a charter under the provisions of section 1729-A. 24 P.S. §17-1741-A(a)(3). If the Department sends a notice of non-renewal to the cyber charter school, it must hold a public hearing concerning the non-renewal. 24 P.S. §17-1729-A(c).

Commonwealth Connections Academy (CCA) submitted a renewal application to continue operating as a cyber charter school.

Based on its review of CCA’s renewal application, and subsequent information, the Department is renewing CCA’s charter for a period of five (5) years.



Secretary of Education
Ronald J. Tomalis



Date

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In Re: Commonwealth Connections Academy Cyber Charter
Technical Assistance

July 27, 2011

Technical Assistance Provided as a Result of the Review

1. **Commonwealth Connections is reminded that charter schools, including cyber charter schools, are not permitted to offer Pre-Kindergarten programs.** Commonwealth Connections states in its renewal application that it is exploring the possibility of offering a pre-Kindergarten program.
2. **The Commonwealth Connections is encouraged to develop a Student Retention Plan.** In its renewal application, Commonwealth Connections stated its concern about student retention and the impact that the lack of student retention has on its academic assessments.
3. **Commonwealth Connections should implement a Response to Intervention and Instruction (RTII) plan.** According to its renewal application, the enrollment of Commonwealth Connections is mostly transient; that is most students who come to Commonwealth Connections are at-risk and once they have been remediated, return to traditional brick and mortar schools. While a student attends the Commonwealth Connections Cyber Charter School, the student should have access to appropriate levels of interventions outlined in RTII.
4. **Commonwealth Connections is reminded of the requirement to submit professional education plans accurately and on time.** The renewal application stated that data analysis to increase student achievement would be the focus of the school's professional development program. Specifically, the application indicated that teachers would be trained in the use of formative assessments and data driven decision making, implementing specific instructional strategies, current curriculum specific topics and trends, utilizing state standards to guide instruction, educational technology and educational trends. The Department's review of the approved Professional Development Plan and comparison with Act 48 activity hours during the period 3/13/2008 to 12/2/2010 uploaded into the Department's Professional Education Management System (PERMS) found that Commonwealth Connections has adhered to its last Department-approved Professional Education Plan. However, the charter school is reminded that it is

necessary to submit its plans on time. The Professional Education Plan via the eStrategic Planning system was nearly six months late.