



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Virtual Schools 'Clicking' for Many Students this School Year

-- Leading Virtual Academy, Connections Academy, Enrolling Students for the 2010-2011 School Year --

BALTIMORE, MD (August 1, 2010) -- A record number of students are heading back to school this year – without ever stepping foot inside a classroom. A growing number of [virtual schools](#) (also known as cyber schools or e-schools), combined with booming parent (and student) demand for high quality virtual education, has more students than ever logging on, instead of boarding a school bus, this back-to-school season.

More than 2 million children in kindergarten through 12th grade are learning online, and their ranks are growing by almost 20 percent each year, according to research by Ambient Insight. Currently, 45 states have significant supplemental online learning programs, or full-time programs, in which students take most or all of their courses online.

“One reason families are turning to full-time virtual schools is that parents are seeking a more personalized education for their children, where students’ studies are tailored to their abilities and interests, and they can work at their own pace,” says Dr. Steven Guttentag, executive vice president and chief education officer for [Connections Academy](#), a leading virtual school provider that offers both public and [private virtual school](#) programs. “Of course most importantly, they work. Students are achieving at high levels and matriculating into some of our nation’s best universities.”

Many parents are drawn to the quality [curriculum](#) a virtual school can offer their student – and programs they might not have access to at the local bricks and mortar school. The current economical climate has forced many neighborhood schools to eliminate programs like foreign language instruction, Advanced Placement (AP) courses and more. At the same time some virtual schools are adding courses like Mandarin Chinese and AP Chemistry.

In most full-time virtual school programs that kids attend from home, families get tremendous [flexibility](#) in when and where school takes place, flexibility that helps them meet work and family needs. So children reap the benefits of a high-quality education and still spend important time with parents and other family members. This can be particularly helpful for parents who are scheduled to for atypical work hours or have to work evenings.

The virtual school boom is good news for parents looking for the best possible school for their children. But since not all virtual schools are created equal, and offer different programs, curricula and resources, parents need to take care to pick a high-quality school that’s the best fit for their child and family. Education experts recommend that parents look for the following benchmarks of a high quality virtual school:

- * **Accreditation** - The school should be accredited by reputable school accreditation organizations, such as AdvancED or the National Council of Education Providers.
- * **Certified and highly qualified teachers** – Look for certified teachers who work together in a professional teaching environment and who are experts in virtual instruction. Teachers should be in regular contact with students and parents, by phone and e-mail.
- * **Rigorous curriculum** – Curriculum should combine the best, late-edition textbooks from leading publishers with engaging online lessons and other high quality resources.
- * **Wide range of courses** – Individualized grade placement for each child, plus college prep and career options, honors and AP courses, plus a wide range of electives, including foreign languages, music, art, journalism and more.
- * **State-of-the-art technology resources** – Must-haves include: an online system providing daily lesson planner, grade book, message boards and more, all in one system; training for students and parents, toll-free tech support hotline; quality computer hardware and accessories like microphone and headset; and a safe, secure e-mail system that provides communications controls and eliminates spam.
- * **Community activities** – Field trips and other group outings offered throughout the year, plus a wide range of extracurricular clubs and activities.
- * **School track record** – Look for a school with a track record of delivering student academic achievement, high levels of parent and student satisfaction or affiliation with a credible, established virtual education provider, like [Connections Academy](#).

In most states, parents can still enroll their children in both public and private full-time virtual school programs for the coming school year. Parents seeking more information about virtual public and private schools can call Connections Academy at (800) 382-6010.

About Connections Academy

Connections Academy is a leading national provider of high-quality virtual education. It operates virtual public and private schools in the U.S. for students in grades K–12 and is a provider of online courses for schools nationwide. Connections Academy schools deliver top quality, personalized education for students that combines certified teachers, a proven curriculum, technology tools, and community experiences to create a supportive and successful environment for children who want an individualized approach to education. Connections Academy’s online course program provides schools across the country with a turnkey online learning solution offering innovative courses and teaching support. In the 2010–2011 school year, Connections Academy will serve students in Arizona, California (Southern and Central), Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Wisconsin, and Wyoming through its public school programs. It serves students in all states in the U.S. through the online private school, National Connections Academy. Connections Academy offers grades K through 12, though some schools do not offer all grades. For more information, call 800-382-6010 or visit www.ConnectionsAcademy.com.

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