



**For Immediate Release**

## **Switching Schools Mid-Year? More Parents Going Virtual to Ease Transition**

BALTIMORE, January 25, 2010 - Every year, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, roughly 2 million American families with children move – and their children switch schools. While many families move over the summer, so their kids can start new schools in the fall, others make the school switch mid-year, often because of parent job changes or family economic challenges. In addition, as more school options are becoming available to parents, a growing number of families who aren't moving their homes are nonetheless changing their children's schools mid-year. Parents who do so are often seeking to give their child a 'fresh start' for a variety of reasons: a student who's bored, or one who's not getting the individualized attention he needs. Student health or social issues can also be factors.

Educators say many families switching their kids' school mid-year are turning to virtual schools like Connections Academy ([www.ConnectionsAcademy.com](http://www.ConnectionsAcademy.com)). The reason is two-fold. First, more families than ever have embraced virtual education in general – roughly two million American K-12 students now get some or all of their educations virtually, according to research firm Ambient Insight. And second, the very format of virtual schools eases the student's adjustment period – and physical transitions for both student and family. At these schools, learning takes place at home, with a parent or 'learning coach' on site, with instruction directed by certified teachers, with whom student and parents communicate frequently by phone and email. Connections Academy enrollment counselors – who oversee enrollments across a national network of 15 schools -- report that their mid-year student enrollments have increased 200 percent over the past four years.

School counselors say that with a little advance planning, a smooth transition to a virtual public school can be easy, and the student can soon achieve both academic and emotional success in his new school.

Here are the Connections Academy counselors' tips for parents to ensure a seamless transition for their child to a virtual school in 2010.

1. **Insist on Quality: Not all Virtual Schools are Created Equal** – Many states have virtual public schools; check [www.ConnectionsAcademy.com](http://www.ConnectionsAcademy.com) to see if there's one in your state. Like all public schools, these schools are tuition-free to families. In states where virtual public schools are not available there are many fee-based virtual private school options. Do your homework to be sure you're picking a high quality virtual school. High-quality virtual schools employ professional and certified teachers. Make sure the school offers an accredited program with a wide range of courses, and a proven curriculum developed by professional educators. Talk to parents with students currently enrolled in the school.

2. Plan Ahead - Think about the best time to make the school switch. For high school (and some middle school) students, it's ideal to finish out the quarter or semester, and then start the new period in the new school. The student gets a fresh start in his new courses, and will have completed coursework from his semester in his previous school. Parents should find out when finals and/or the next upcoming grading period ends in their current school, and when the new one starts, and use this as the target start date for the new school. Of course, sometimes life throws you a curve ball – unexpected job changes or other sudden family matters seldom come with advance warning. In that case, parents should reach out to the virtual school's guidance and enrollment officials as early as they can, and work with them to make the school switch as smooth as possible.
3. Get Your Paperwork in Order – It can take a while to complete the enrollment process at a virtual school, so parents should start sooner rather than later gathering together all the necessary paperwork they'll need to enroll their child in the new virtual school – transcripts, birth certificates, immunization records, and the like. Check, of course, with enrollment officials at the new school to get a list of required documents, and what, if any, admission deadlines might apply.
4. Transfer Credits – Many schools don't mail home fall semester or 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter report cards until well into the spring semester, making it tricky for some parents to show proof of course completion, and to get all the student's course credits transferred to the new school. Parents facing this situation should check with their new school's enrollment counselors to find out what other alternative paperwork they can supply, and then request it from the previous school.
5. Maintain an Open Dialogue – The parents' role in ensuring a smooth mid-year transition doesn't end when their child is enrolled in his new virtual public school, has all his books and academic supplies, and has started classes. "The key to a smooth transition – to any school, not just a virtual public school -- is for parents to maintain an open dialogue and communications with the school," observes Tisha Rinker, senior manager of school counseling for Connections Academy.

### **About Connections Academy**

Connections Academy is a leading national provider of high-quality, highly accountable virtual public schools in fourteen states operated in partnership with charter schools, school districts, and state departments of education. 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. In Connections Academy's Personalized Performance Learning® approach, students use daily lesson plans and curriculum materials provided by Connections Academy. Teachers develop a learning plan for each student, utilizing a proprietary, web-based Learning Management System to deliver, track, and administer the learning. In 2009-10, Connections Academy will serve students in Arizona, California (Southern and Central), Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Minnesota, Nevada, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Wisconsin and Wyoming. Connections Academy offers grades K through 12, though some schools do not offer all grades. Connections Academy also serves K-12 students in all states through its private virtual school, National Connections Academy. For more information, call 800-382-6010 or visit [www.connectionsacademy.com](http://www.connectionsacademy.com).

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