

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Common Questions

### WHAT IS CONNECTIONS ACADEMY?

Connections Academy –supported schools are tuition–free online public schools for grades K–12 offered in certain states. This is a unique program that combines the strong parental involvement of homeschooling, professional expertise and accountability, and a flexible learning environment. Connections Academy provides the tools and support students need to learn in an online setting. [Learn how to enroll.](#)

### WHAT GRADES DOES CONNECTIONS ACADEMY SERVE?

Connections Academy serves students in grades K–12 in most states. [Check your school's home page](#) to find out more.

### WHAT SETS CONNECTIONS ACADEMY APART?

Families choose Connections Academy because they trust us to give their children a unique, personalized school experience where students can learn and grow. Supported by Pearson, the world's learning company, Connections Academy provides a complete, fulltime education for children—one that includes all the core courses, electives, and social opportunities K-12 students need. Caring teachers specialize in online learning and work with parents. Together, they set individual goals and ensure that students learn. Connections Academy prepares children for a bright future—whether that includes college, technical training, or career readiness.

### HOW IS CONNECTIONS ACADEMY DIFFERENT FROM TRADITIONAL SCHOOLING?

Connections Academy schools are committed to providing a high-quality education that is personalized to meet a student's individual needs. This level of personalization is not commonly available in traditional public bricks-and-mortar schools. Using our accessible technology, we connect parents, teachers, and students from home or anywhere there is Internet service. Additionally, families benefit from [unique flexibility](#) in creating their schedule, something that typically isn't possible in a traditional setting. Parents are also able to control their student's learning environment, ensuring a safe and stimulating atmosphere. Check out the Connections Academy Resource Hub to learn more about the benefits of attending school online.

### WHAT DOES A CONNECTIONS ACADEMY FAMILY RECEIVE?

- **First-Class Curriculum:** Our program features curriculum developed by leading educational publishers. Connections Academy families receive a combination of textbooks\*, online textbooks, workbooks, comprehensive lesson plans, and exciting [enrichment courses](#).
- **Exceptional Teaching:** Connections Academy's professional teachers work one-on-one with students and their parents to instruct, review assignments, and customize the curriculum. Our teachers provide extra help for struggling or gifted students.
- **State-of-the-Art Technology:** Families receive online communication, planning, and learning management tools; online lessons and library resources; and technology

## **IS THE CONNECTIONS ACADEMY PROGRAM HOMESCHOOLING?**

Although Connections Academy and homeschooling have some similar attributes, [Connections Academy is not homeschooling](#). All Connections Academy schools are public school programs. Connections Academy schools provide a defined set of curriculum materials that have been specifically aligned to local standards and use certified teachers to evaluate student performance, including decisions concerning the child's grade-level promotion. All Connections Academy students are required to take state standardized tests, and the schools are accountable to regulatory authorities for the students' performance.

## **CAN I ENROLL MY CHILD AFTER THE SCHOOL YEAR HAS STARTED?**

Yes. In many states, you can enroll after the start of the school year. Most schools have enrollment deadlines at some point during the year, however. Check your school's enrollment page for more information, or call us for a consultation, particularly if you want to start late in the school year.

## **CAN MY CHILD ATTEND THE PROGRAM PART-TIME OR DURING THE SUMMER?**

The Connections Academy public schools are offered on a full-time basis. [Pearson Online Academy](#), our accredited online private school, offers a [part-time program](#) and [online summer school](#) in addition to a fulltime program.

## **ARE CONNECTIONS ACADEMY SCHOOLS NONPROFIT?**

Connections Academy public schools are operated under contract with nonprofit organizations that are either charter schools, school districts, or governmental entities. Pearson Online Academy is a private school.

## **WHEN DOES THE SCHOOL YEAR START AND END?**

School year start and end dates [vary by school](#). Check your school's calendar page for the correct start and end dates.

## **WHAT ARE THE JOB OPPORTUNITIES AT CONNECTIONS ACADEMY?**

Connections Academy is always looking for hardworking dedicated individuals to [join the team](#). Please review the current openings to see if a position is available near you. Connections Academy is proud to be an Equal Opportunity Employer.

# Tuition & Costs

## HOW MUCH DOES THE ONLINE PROGRAM COST?

The online public school program is free, including all of the books and curriculum. The only [costs](#) are the optional field trips, which are organized by your school's community coordinators and staff, and the replenishment of some school supplies, such as printer cartridges.

## WILL I NEED TO PURCHASE BOOKS OR MATERIALS FOR COURSES?

No. All required books and instructional materials for courses are provided to students. Some texts are provided online, and other texts are in print form.

# Curriculum

## WHAT CURRICULUM DOES CONNECTIONS ACADEMY PROVIDE?

Connections Academy provides comprehensive lesson plans online and in print, along with a number of exciting elective courses. The proven curriculum incorporates materials developed by leading educational institutions, as well as lessons and other resources [developed by curriculum specialists](#). The curriculum for each public school is aligned to the state standards.

## WILL MY CHILD BE REQUIRED TO TAKE STANDARDIZED TESTS, AND WHERE?

Yes. All online public school students must complete the standardized tests that are required in their state or district. We also provide a test preparation program to develop the skills that students will need in order to perform well on many types of assessments. Your Connections Academy school will arrange testing locations throughout the state and will inform you in advance of where and when your child is scheduled to attend.

## HOW ARE LESSONS CUSTOMIZED?

Teachers and [Learning Coaches](#) work closely together to create a unique learning environment and to set goals for their students' learning. Teachers use an individualized approach to learning throughout the year called Personalized Performance Learning® (PPL), which allows them to evaluate the needs of a student and customize accordingly.

## WHAT IS A TYPICAL DAY LIKE?

Connections Academy students often lead busy lives, and this online flexibility allows for learning when it works best. Students will need to be available for teacher-led LiveLesson® sessions, but are able to choose how to arrange their free time in between. For some students, scheduling breaks in between lessons may be the answer to optimized learning. For others, leaving time for extracurricular activities is key. Check out the Connections Academy blog to see some examples of [sample schedules](#).

# Enrollment

## HOW DO I START THE ENROLLMENT PROCESS?

Find your school and [get started!](#)

## HOW ARE COURSES CHOSEN ONCE WE ARE ENROLLED?

Connections Academy's Academic Placement Services team uses academic records to place students in courses that are the best fit for them.

## WHAT IS THE MAXIMUM STUDENT ENROLLMENT PER HOUSEHOLD AT CONNECTIONS ACADEMY?

Connections Academy is comfortable with a ratio of 4:1 (four children to one Learning Coach). An additional adult serving as Learning Coach is recommended for more than 4 students in a household. In the event that the additional adult is not a parent or legal guardian, a Designated Learning Coach Agreement must be completed by both the parent/legal guardian and Designated Learning Coach.

## HOW DO I FIND OUT WHETHER OR NOT MY CHILD MAY BE ELIGIBLE TO ATTEND CONNECTIONS ACADEMY?

Find the [Connections Academy school in your state](#). Under the school's enroll section, check the eligibility page to find the following:

- Grades offered.
- The age that a child must be to start school in your state.
- The acceptable proof of age documents in your state.
- Any geographical restrictions for attending in your state.
- The acceptable proof of residency documents in your state.
- Restrictions for submitting immunization documentation.
- Types of immunizations (shots) your student must have for enrollment.
- Prior public schooling limitations.
- Supporting documentation.
- Types of documentation that may apply to your student that may need to be submitted.

## HOW DOES SELF-ENROLLMENT WORK IF I AM 18 YEARS OLD, OR OLDER, OR AM AN EMANCIPATED MINOR?

Students who are 18 or over must meet age eligibility requirements in their state. Students must also submit academic documentation of all courses attempted since entering the 9th grade. Academic documentation will be reviewed by a school counselor to determine the student's eligibility to complete the program requirements before meeting the age cap for enrollment. Students who cannot complete the program requirements before meeting the age cap for enrollment are not eligible to enroll.

Both emancipated minors and students 18 years and older are required to complete the Parent/Legal Guardian (Caretaker) Acknowledgement (PLCA) form and to provide all required enrollment documentation before the student can enroll. Emancipated minors must also submit court documentation for their emancipation. Please contact the Enrollment Team at [800-382-6010](tel:800-382-6010) for more information.

## **WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THE TERM “LEARNING COACH”?**

The term “Learning Coach” is used to represent the role that the enrolling parent/guardian plays in the student’s educational experience. The enrolling parent/guardian chooses to serve as the “Learning Coach” which may include [working closely with the teacher](#) to ensure assignments are completed, schedules are met, and students are engaged and motivated. The parent/guardian may designate another trusted adult to act as a Learning Coach by completing the Designated Learning Coach online form.

## **IF I ENROLL MY STUDENT IN CONNECTIONS ACADEMY WILL MY STUDENT BE ABLE TO LOG IN AT ANY TIME TO DO SCHOOL WORK OR ONLY DURING NORMAL SCHOOL HOURS?**

You will have access to Pearson Online Classroom (formerly known as Connexus®), our education management system, at any time of the day including weekends and holiday breaks. This level of flexibility helps you to design a learning day that works best for your family.

## **WHAT IS THE SECRET TO SUCCESS AT CONNECTIONS ACADEMY?**

Communication is the most important element in succeeding with online learning. If you or your student experience any problems along the way, contact us immediately. Many kinds of support are available for students and families, including [enrollment help](#), computer/technical support, academic assistance, and school counselor support. We are ready and willing to assist you—give us a call or send us a WebMail message. Communication is key throughout your entire experience with Connections Academy.

## **WHY IS THE VIRTUAL ENROLLMENT PROCESS DIFFERENT FROM A PHYSICAL SCHOOL?**

Local schools serve one district. Connections Academy serves students from multiple districts statewide. Not all districts statewide accept the same documentation.

## **WHY DOES A VIRTUAL OR CYBER SCHOOL NEED DOCUMENTS SUCH AS THE IMMUNIZATION RECORD TO PROCESS MY STUDENT?**

Connections Academy schools operate like any other public school. Therefore, our schools must comply with the same state regulations. Specific documents are required for all enrolling students.

## **WHY IS ACADEMIC DOCUMENTATION REQUESTED FOR MY STUDENT?**

During the enrollment process, submission of academic documentation such as a report card, unofficial transcript, schedule, or current progress report, helps to ensure that your student has an accurate and personalized course placement to start with Connections Academy.

## **HOW DO I OBTAIN COPIES OF MY STUDENT’S RECORDS FROM THE PREVIOUS SCHOOL?**

As a parent/legal guardian you may request copies of the student’s most recent report card or unofficial transcript, IEP documentation, birth certificate, and immunization record from their file. DO NOT withdraw from your current school or request a complete copy of the student’s cumulative file prior to completing the enrollment process, as this information will be requested from the student’s previous school upon completion of the enrollment process.

## **HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO COMPLETE THE ENROLLMENT PROCESS?**

That depends on you. The sooner you complete online enrollment forms and submit the required documents, the sooner your student will be enrolled. It typically takes two weeks or more to complete the entire enrollment process.

**TIP:** Log in to your caretaker homepage daily to review the student's enrollment status and the verification of documents you submit.

## **WHAT CAN I DO TO COMPLETE THE ENROLLMENT PROCESS FASTER?**

Our process is streamlined to minimize any inconvenience to you while still meeting state regulations. Refer to the Enrollment Instructions document for some tips to help you keep the process moving.

## **HOW SHOULD I VERIFY THAT THE DOCUMENTS I SENT ARRIVED?**

After submitting your documents, you can navigate to the Submit Documents section located in the Enrollment Details. There you can see if your documents have been verified or are still waiting to be processed. The Enrollment Details will also show if your file was marked invalid and your document will be removed so that you can upload a new document. If you are unable to verify the status of your documents or have any questions, please call **800-382-6010** and contact the Enrollment Team using the document submission option in our phone system. We will check the system to see if the document was received. Please be prepared to provide us with the following information: student's name, number of pages sent, the date sent, and if sent by fax, the fax number.

## **ONCE I COMPLETE THE STEPS TO CONFIRM MY STUDENT'S ENROLLMENT, HOW LONG DO I WAIT TO WITHDRAW FROM MY LOCAL SCHOOL?**

After you have confirmed your student's enrollment with Connections Academy, you should withdraw your child from your previous/local school immediately—preferably the same day. Delaying withdrawal could result in confusion, extra documentation, or cancellation of enrollment.

Do not withdraw your student before confirming your student's enrollment, as this may result in additional documentation being required (e.g. report card). Delays in submitting these documents could result in delays starting school.

## **HOW CAN I CHANGE MY ADDRESS AND OTHER CONTACT INFORMATION?**

You can change your information by logging into Pearson Online Classroom (formerly known as Connexus®). On your caretaker homepage, click on the "Change Contact Information" link. Or, you can notify the student's teacher who can submit the change for you.

## **I NEED TO CHANGE MY STUDENT'S NAME IN PEARSON ONLINE CLASSROOM®, WHO DO I CONTACT?**

In order to update a parent or student name, Connections Academy will need a copy of the legal name change documentation such as an amended birth certificate, marriage certificate or court order. Please submit this documentation to the Enrollment Department. If students use a preferred name and/or gender that differs from the legal name and gender, you can reach out to your school counselor or principal to make that request once students become enrolled.

# Socialization

## **WHAT DO CURRENT PARENTS THINK ABOUT CONNECTIONS ACADEMY?**

Every year, we ask Connections Academy families to rate our program. This year, once again, parents who completed online school reviews gave us high marks for helping students succeed academically and personally. See the results of the latest [Parent Satisfaction Survey](#).

## **WHAT IS THE ROLE OF A LEARNING COACH?**

Just like in a bricks-and-mortar school, the most successful students have parents who are involved in their education. We recommend that a parent or other trusted adult serve as a Learning Coach to support the student's learning. Each family does this differently, and the role largely depends on the age of the student. For instance, students in high school are encouraged to work more independently, whereas elementary-age students will need more support while completing lessons. Some of the ways families may support learning include providing daily structure, communicating with teachers, and helping students stay on track.

Throughout a student's education, Connections Academy teachers take the lead in ensuring student success. When first getting started, the Connections Academy Family Support Program provides ample resources to help families become acquainted with the online learning structure. Learn more about the [responsibilities of a Learning Coach](#).

## **ARE THERE OPPORTUNITIES TO MEET OTHER CONNECTIONS ACADEMY FAMILIES AND SOCIALIZE ONCE REGISTERED?**

Yes. We understand the importance of students and parents interacting with others in the program and in the community. There are a number of opportunities for you to take part in activities, both online and in person. Community coordinators and school staff plan field trips, special projects, and group meetings with other families in your area. Online discussion groups and the private email system allow you to communicate with other students or parents from all Connections Academy schools.

## **WHAT DOES CONNECTIONS ACADEMY DO TO HELP STUDENTS REMAIN SAFE WHILE PARTICIPATING IN THIS PROGRAM?**

Connections Academy knows that for students to achieve at the highest levels, they need not only a great academic program, but also the freedom to learn in a safe and comfortable setting. Parents and Learning Coaches also play a key role in creating this environment to ensure their child's well-being. Below are some of the most important resources Connections Academy provides to ensure that students are safe and focused on learning:

Throughout a student's education, Connections Academy teachers take the lead in ensuring student success. When first getting started, the Connections Academy Family Support Program provides ample resources to help families become acquainted with the online learning structure. Learn more about the responsibilities of a Learning Coach.

- All Connections Academy–provided computers are equipped with heightened Internet security settings and Internet filtering software that can be activated upon request by calling the Technical Support line at **800-382-6010**. If you are using your own computer, Technical Support can help you configure Internet security settings and find additional Internet filtering software.
- We provide an Internet safety course for students, parents, and Learning Coaches. The course contains valuable information about practicing safe behaviors online. This course is also required training for all Connections Academy school staff.
- Staff trainings regarding student safety are a critical part of the Connections Academy professional development plan. The Connections Academy course *Students in Distress: Recognizing and Responding* is designed to help teachers and other school staff become familiar with the signs of distress, such as from bullying/cyberbullying, neglect and abuse, or depression, or other problems that would keep students from doing their best. The course also teaches them how to respond promptly and professionally.
- Regular required contact between teachers and students helps teachers get to know each student individually. Educators who know their students are better able to note behaviors or attitudes that may indicate problems.
- Connections Academy strictly prohibits any form of bullying/cyberbullying, harassment, hazing, or other destructive actions that may cause emotional and/or physical harm to students. School policies regarding these prohibited behaviors are documented in the *School Handbook: General Portion* and the state-specific *School Handbook Supplement*.
- Each Connections Academy course contains a summary of web links so parents and Learning Coaches can quickly and easily note any links that they may not wish to have their student access.

## **CAN MY STUDENT PARTICIPATE IN SPORTS IN THE SCHOOL DISTRICT?**

Many states allow students to participate in extracurricular activities within their resident district; however, there are some states with restrictions regarding online school. Check with the school in your state or give us a call at **800-382-6010**.

## **Technology Requirements**

### **HOW MUCH TIME DO STUDENTS SPEND ON THE COMPUTER?**

The amount of time a student spends on the computer varies by grade. Younger students spend approximately 15–30%, middle school students spend about 50–75%, and high school students spend about 80–90% of their school day working on the computer.\*

\* Time on the computer may vary based on the use of print textbooks or online textbooks. The availability of print textbooks varies by state and course.



## **WHAT COMPUTER SKILLS DO CONNECTIONS ACADEMY STUDENTS AND LEARNING COACHES NEED?**

Students and Learning Coaches do not need advanced computer skills to attend Connections Academy. Through our Learning Coach Success series, parents are given the opportunity to attend a variety of sessions on subjects about anything from becoming acquainted with technology, to where to find resources in Pearson Online Classroom (formerly known as Connexus®), our education management system. We also provide a technology literacy program that aids students in developing additional skills.

## **WHAT HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE DO I NEED TO ACCESS LESSONS AND LEARNING TOOLS ONLINE?**

There are some specific software requirements necessary to use Pearson Online Classroom (formerly known as Connexus®), our online education management system. Please refer to the [Technology Support](#) page for complete details.