

*Oklahoma*

# School Performance Review

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**OKLAHOMA**  
**CONNECTIONS**  
ACADEMY

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Office of Educational Quality & Accountability |

May 2018 |





OFFICE OF EDUCATIONAL  
QUALITY & ACCOUNTABILITY

May, 2018

Fellow Oklahomans:

The Office of Educational Quality & Accountability is pleased to present the Oklahoma Connections Academy Performance Review upon the request of the Oklahoma Statewide Virtual Charter School Board (SVCSB).

Oklahoma Connections Academy (OKCA) has a number of impressive programs; however, similar to the brick and mortar schools, OKCA is also faced with challenges. The review contains recommendations to help OKCA meet those challenges and to improve the efficiency of their operations. This review also highlights a number of “Commendable Practices” in programs, operations, and services provided by the administration, teachers, and staff.

We are grateful for the cooperation of OKCA board, administration, staff, parents, and students for their input into this review. The administration and staff are also to be commended for their dedication toward improving educational opportunities for all students.

We are pleased to announce that this review is available in hardcopy through the Office of Educational Quality & Accountability and on the office’s web site at [www.oeka.ok.gov](http://www.oeka.ok.gov)

Respectfully yours,

Dr. Daniel Craig  
Executive Director



# Oklahoma School Performance Review

## Oklahoma Connections Academy

May 2018



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This publication was prepared by the Office of Educational Quality & Accountability as authorized by Title 70 of the Oklahoma Statutes, Section 3-118.1 and 1210.5331.



Office of Educational Quality and Accountability  
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The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability supports high level student performance by ensuring quality evidence based educator preparation, improving P20 school efficiency and effectiveness, and providing comprehensive statistical information for all stakeholders.

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## *Executive Summary*

The Oklahoma School Performance Review (OSPR) Program was authorized by the Oklahoma Legislature during the 2001 session, amended during the 2005 session, and amended again during the 2012 session. The responsibility to conduct school performance reviews was originally assigned to the Office of Accountability, which is now the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (OEQA). The purpose of a performance review is to develop findings, commendations, and recommendations for school districts regarding (1) containing costs; (2) improving management strategies; and (3) promoting better education for Oklahoma children.

The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability began the performance review of Oklahoma Connections Academy (OKCA) in November, 2017. OEQA's in-house consultants, Prismatic Services, Inc. and BDLC Research & Consulting Services conducted the review upon the request of the Oklahoma Statewide Virtual Charter School Board (SVCSB). The consulting team conducted individual interviews and focus groups with school personnel and board members. The team also reviewed operations by touring facilities. The administrators, teachers, support staff, parents, and high school students completed confidential surveys. The consulting team tabulated the surveys and used the results in this review. Survey results are contained in **Appendices A through C**.

OEQA selected five traditional brick and mortar Oklahoma school districts as peer districts for OKCA based upon size, percentage of economically disadvantaged students and teacher/student ratio. Since there are no virtual peers for OKCA at this time that are of similar size, these five districts were formed based on OEQA methodology. OKCA and its five peers are part of the **Community Group E1**.<sup>1</sup> Peers include, Bethel, Chandler, Inola, Marlow, and Sequoyah. These peer districts are found only in chapter two. For chapter three OEQA selected three virtual charters as peers for fiscal comparative purposes. For further comparison, the state average was also used in both chapters.

During this review, the consulting team developed 26 recommendations designed to improve operations and support increased academic performance at OKCA. In some cases, these recommendations should result in a net savings to the district, in some cases a net cost, and in other cases they should have no fiscal impact, but should improve district effectiveness. A detailed list of costs and savings by recommendation appears in **Exhibit 3**.

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability wishes to express their appreciation to the Oklahoma Statewide Virtual Charter School Board and its Executive Director, Dr. Rebecca Wilkinson, for the opportunity to provide a performance review of Oklahoma Connections Academy. OEQA also, wishes to recognize Tammy Shepherd, Head of School for OKCA, and

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<sup>1</sup> Community Group E1 = 1,000-1,999 students enrolled with less than 62 percent of students eligible to participate in the federally funded Free and Reduced Payment Lunch Program. <https://www.ok.gov/oeqa/documents/excerpt2015.pdf>

her staff for their hospitality during our onsite visit and their gracious cooperation during the entire process of this review.

### Oklahoma Connections Academy

OKCA serves kindergarten through twelfth grade students and offers an individualized, online curriculum. OKCA's June 30, 2016 Financial Statements state, "The District is a not for profit corporation in the State of Oklahoma filed [sic] with the secretary of state of Oklahoma. The District is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as an exempt organization under section 501(C)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code." Connections Academy of Oklahoma, LLC (Connections, LLC) is the charter management organization for OKCA.

OKCA was established in 2011 and was authorized by the Oklahoma State Virtual Charter School Board in 2014-2015. OKCA is Oklahoma's second smallest Virtual Charter School with an enrollment that has grown to 1400 students. Their mission is to help each student maximize his/her potential and meet the highest academic standards through a uniquely individualized learning program, which includes a flexible schedule, high-level teacher interaction, rigorous curriculum, and family involvement.

OKCA's headquarters is in Bartlesville, OK, but its students are located in cities and towns across the state of Oklahoma. Bartlesville is located in Northeast Oklahoma, about 50 miles north of Tulsa. OKCA operates in leased property from Sigmon Properties, LLC. The attendance boundaries of OKCA are the borders of the State of Oklahoma. In other words, any student resident of Oklahoma is eligible to attend OKCA. One caveat, however, is that students enrolled in statewide virtual charter schools cannot participate in any activities administered by the Oklahoma Secondary Schools Activities Association (OSSAA).

### Current Demographics

**Exhibit 1** shows the OKCA fall student enrollment and demographic data for school year 2017-18. The data below show that the majority of OKCA students are identified as Caucasian. The next largest identified group is Two or More Races (non-Hispanic).

**Exhibit 1**  
**OKCA Fall Enrollment by Site**  
**2017-2018**

Site	Grade Span	Fall Enrollment	Hispanic	American Indian	Asian	Black	Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	White	Two or More Races
Elementary	K-5	344	12%	8%	0%	11%	1%	57%	11%
Middle	6-8	346	11%	10%	1%	5%	0%	62%	11%
High	9-12	710	8%	10%	1%	5%	<1%	64%	12%
<b>Total</b>	<b>K-12</b>	<b>1,400</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>11%</b>

Source: SDE

**Exhibit 2** below shows the fall student enrollment for each Oklahoma virtual charter school for school years 2014-15 to 2017-18. OKCA fall enrollment numbers have increased each year. The most recent enrollment numbers are also the greatest for OKCA.

**Exhibit 2**  
**Virtual Charter Schools' Fall Enrollment**

School Year	OK Connections Academy	Insight School of OK	Epic Charter School	OK Virtual Charter Academy
2014-2015	955	281	4,370	2,518
2015-2016	1,118	346	6,037	2,400
2016-2017	1,246	414	9,077	2,429
2017-2018	1,400	396	8,059	2,234

*Source: SDE*

## COMMENDATIONS

The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability identified “exemplary” or “best practices” of Oklahoma Connections Academy that led to 37 separate commendations. OEQA recommends that other school districts and/or virtual charters throughout Oklahoma examine these exemplary programs and services to see if they could be adapted to meet their local needs. The commendations are listed below and explained in detail in each chapter.

### Chapter 1: MANAGEMENT, PERSONNEL, AND COMMUNICATIONS

The OKCA organizational and reporting structures are well-understood by school staff.

The OKCA planning and goal setting process is formalized and includes stakeholder input.

OKCA strives to have an Oklahoma-certified teaching staff to serve its students.

OKCA provides a robust professional development program to its staff.

OKCA effectively communicates with its stakeholders.

OKCA builds a sense of community through multiple and diverse field trips.

### Chapter 2: INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY

OKCA leadership understands the value of a professional learning community for continuous school improvement by ensuring all staff receive professional training in PLC processes thus promoting fidelity in the implementation of this evidenced-based practice.

OKCA is commended for creating the structures needed for successful implementation of PLCs by providing time, space, expectations, and leadership that positively impacts teaching practice and student achievement for overall school improvement.

OKCA implements a strategic onboarding plan for all new teachers that ensures smooth transition with effective training, mentoring, and coaching.

OKCA is intentional to ensure formalized processes are in place to assist in the ongoing effort to align the adopted curriculum with the state's academic standards (OAS).

OKCA is commended for providing students with quality curriculum as well as individualized curriculum choices meeting the needs of its students for continuous success.

OKCA is commended for providing and implementing vertical curriculum alignment documents that ensure student preparation for the next grade level.

OKCA is commended for providing effective instructional leaders to guide the district's ongoing commitment toward student success and school improvement.

OKCA staff is commended for employing promising instructional delivery strategies in an online learning environment.

OKCA teaching staff is commended for their efforts to increase student engagement and interaction using the synchronous e-learning format for instructional delivery.

OKCA is commended for an instructional delivery program that a majority of student survey participants perceive as contributing to their development on eight college/career outcomes.

OKCA is meeting individual student interests by emphasizing and integrating the use of technology tools into the instructional delivery process.

OKCA implements procedures and communicates expectations to ensure all teaching staff understands the important role assessments must have in the teaching and learning cycle and includes the application of both formative and summative assessments.

OKCA strategically plans for organized testing sessions across the state while greatly exceeding the minimum number of annual testing sites contributing to a high percentage of student participation.

OKCA teachers and leaders possess the capacity for collecting and analyzing end-of-year summative assessment data to design instruction and remediation to ensure that there is consistent implementation using a system-wide process.

OKCA special education staff is commended for providing special education students with a program that has instilled a growing confidence from parents and colleagues within the virtual charter district.

OKCA provides online therapy for students on IEPs, minimizing the inconveniences for families in disadvantaged circumstances while also taking advantage of cost-savings that can be used to enhance student learning.

OKCA seeks to include positions and programs that will support students and their families in acclimating to the virtual school environment while making strong efforts in helping students graduate on time.

OKCA provides an innovative and self-evaluative counseling program that contributes to secondary students' well-being and achievement.

### **Chapter 3: BUSINESS OPERATIONS**

OKCA is protected from financial risks and deficits via its *Services Agreement* with Connections, LLC.

OKCA has written purchasing procedures, which are followed by pertinent staff.

OKCA is commended for receiving no findings of significant deficiencies in its financial audits.

### **Chapter 4: FACILITIES USE AND MANAGEMENT**

The OKCA central office expansion provided many positive results for staff.

OKCA has an efficient and effective process for determining and staffing testing sites.

### **Chapter 5: TECHNOLOGY**

OKCA has excellent support systems for students and teachers experiencing technical difficulties.

OKCA ensures its teachers are comfortable with teaching in a virtual environment.

The district leverages its high-technology environment to support extensive communications between all stakeholders.

Although the state requirement for students to travel to a physical location for state-required testing is burdensome, OKCA handles it well.

OKCA provides an extensive tool kit for teachers and principals to analyze students' progress and learning.

OKCA uses technology to support a new initiative in engaging its students.

OKCA makes a plethora of resources available to regular and special education students.

All OKCA teachers are provided with the technology tools needed to be successful.

**RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROJECTED COSTS AND SAVINGS**

A list of recommendations with their associated costs or savings is provided in **Exhibit 3**. In each chapter, implementation strategies and the estimates of fiscal impact follow each recommendation in this report. The implementation section associated with each recommendation highlights the actions necessary to achieve the proposed results. Many of the recommendations have no costs or savings associated with them, but are designed to formalize, improve, and streamline operations. In some cases, the consulting team has made recommendations that will likely generate savings for the district, but in an effort to be conservative, no specific savings were estimated.

It must be understood that not all of the recommendations can be started at one time. The consulting team did not want to establish priorities by indicating which recommendations should be implemented immediately and which ones should be implemented later. It will be up to the district to decide which recommendations to implement and the timelines for beginning their implementation.

The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability recommends that the SVCSB ask OKCA's Head of School and governing board to review the recommendations, develop an implementation plan, and monitor its progress.

**Exhibit 3  
Summary of Costs and Savings by Recommendation**

	Recommendation	Estimated (Costs) or Savings					Total Five-Year (Costs) or Savings
		2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	
<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>Management, Personnel, and Communications</b>						
1	Increase stakeholder engagement in governing board meetings.						\$0
2	Develop onboarding and refresher training for OKCA governing board members.						\$0
3	Create opportunities for governing board members to interact with parents and students.						\$0
4	Communicate the salary schedule to current and prospective employees.						\$0
5	Using stakeholder input, create more opportunities for students and parents to interact and work together.						\$0
	<b>Subtotal – 5</b>						<b>\$0</b>
<b>Chapter 2</b>	<b>Instructional Delivery System</b>						
6	OKCA leaders should formalize the PLC collaboration process by incorporating common procedures that will maintain focus and create stability for each meeting. Well-developed PLC collaborative time drives improvement of student achievement and contributes to the professional growth of teachers.						\$0
7	OKCA should transition the current curriculum guides into grade level/content specific pacing calendars that reflect a schedule of when standards/objectives are to be taught while including the OAS resource components within the calendar.						\$0
8	OKCA should first study the issue of increasing the number of teachers, if financially feasible; secondly, include more engaging instructional strategies that would increase student/teacher interactions to improve academic achievement outcomes in the synchronous environment.						\$0
9	OKCA faculty should increase facilitating collaborative project opportunities using technology innovation to enhance student-to-student interactions while developing college and career readiness skills.						\$0

	Recommendation	Estimated (Costs) or Savings					Total Five-Year (Costs) or Savings
		2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	
10	OKCA should replace its current computer policy with one that reflects a more accessible approach for all students, thus ensuring access to the instructional delivery program and curriculum.	(\$303,250)					(\$303,250)
11	Prioritize this student performance issue by developing a plan that will include an ongoing examination of persistency data to determine if students enrolled at OKCA for three years or more are performing better than those students at lesser persistency levels.						\$0
12	Reconsider the current GT identification policy to include younger students.						\$0
13	Establish a formalized evaluation tool(s) to examine the implemented plans that are associated with the counseling program for the purpose of continuous improvement and increasing student graduation rates.						\$0
<b>Subtotal – 8</b>		<b>(\$303,250)</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>(\$303,250)</b>
<b>Chapter 3</b>	<b>Business Operations</b>						
14	Include local stakeholders in the budgetary process.						\$0
15	Develop a target amount for carryover each year.						\$0
16	Develop a process to seek, apply for, and monitor grants from local, state, and national entities.						\$0
17	Do not code non-cash in-kind contributions from Connections, LLC as local revenue in OCAS.						\$0
18	Develop and approve a more detailed investment policy.						\$0
19	Purchase a fire-proof safe for checks and cash.	(\$500)					(\$500)
<b>Subtotal – 6</b>		<b>(\$500)</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>(\$500)</b>
<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>Facilities Use and Management</b>						
20	Task a position to make inspections of the fire extinguishers.						\$0
21	Acquire an AED for the central office.						\$0
22	Develop an energy management program.						\$0
23	Ensure that AEDs are provided at each testing site.						\$0
<b>Subtotal - 4</b>		<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>



	Recommendation	Estimated (Costs) or Savings					Total Five-Year (Costs) or Savings
		2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	
Chapter 5	<b>Support Services – Technology</b>						
24	Survey students and parents annually to assess the success of communication methods and to identify areas in need of improvement.						\$0
25	Provide families with an explicit list of recommended computer technology prior to enrollment and develop a policy to loan an adequate laptop to students who qualify for free- or reduced-price meals. As part of this, OKCA may want to offer an upgraded headset option for purchase.						\$0
26	Prioritize working with Microsoft to obtain educational licensing and free MS Office tools for students.						\$0
	<b>Subtotal – 3</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
	<b>Total savings</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
	<b>Total costs</b>	<b>(\$303,750)</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>(\$303,750)</b>
	<b>Total net savings and costs</b>	<b>(\$303,750)</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>(\$303,750)</b>

School Performance Review reports are typically lengthy and densely packed with information. They can at first be overwhelming to district stakeholders. For that reason, the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability will provide the Follow-up Planning Guide. This Planning Guide contains the recommendations from the OSPR report. We suggest you use this guide in selecting the recommendations your Charter will want to implement over the next five years. This is only for planning purposes and will not need to be submitted to the Office. You will receive a survey over the next two years to complete and return to our office to inform us of your progress.

*Chapter 1:*

*Management, Personnel, and  
Communications*

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## Chapter 1

# *Management, Personnel, and Communications*

This chapter addresses the management, personnel, and communications of Oklahoma Connections Academy (OKCA) in the following sections:

- A. Mission
- B. Accountability
- C. Enrollment and Demographics
- D. Organization and Management
- E. Planning and Evaluation
- F. Human Resources and Professional Development
- G. Communication and Community Involvement

Beginning with only 90 students and eight staff, OKCA was established in 2011-12 in partnership with Sperry Public Schools. In 2012-13 the virtual school partnered with Copan Public Schools. In both cases, OKCA answered to the local school boards and was not considered an autonomous charter school. Through legislative changes, the charter school was sponsored by the Statewide Virtual Charter School Board (SVCSB) in 2014-15.

### A. *MISSION*

OKCA serves kindergarten through twelfth grade students and offers an individualized, online curriculum. The OKCA website states, “Oklahoma Connections Academy (OKCA) is a tuition-free K–12 online public school that students attend from home. OKCA brings a fully accredited public education and some of the best educational resources directly to your family’s door—anywhere in Oklahoma.”

As shown below, the school district posts its mission, goals, and beliefs throughout the central office, located in Bartlesville, Oklahoma.



The *Oklahoma Connections Academy School Handbook Supplement 2017-18* states, “The mission of Oklahoma Connections Academy (OKCA) is to help each student maximize his/her potential and meet the highest academic standards through a uniquely individualized learning program, which includes a flexible schedule, high-level teacher interaction, rigorous curriculum, and family involvement.”

**Exhibit 1-1** below shows the responses from 51 OKCA staff and 408 OKCA parents regarding the school district’s mission statement. A majority of OKCA staff and parents believe the school district’s mission is focused on student success. A majority of the staff also believe the mission is reviewed and revised with stakeholder input.

**Exhibit 1-1**  
**Survey Results Regarding the Mission**

Group	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Staff	OKCA’s mission statement is clearly focused on student success.	89%	9%	2%	0%	0%
	OKCA’s mission statement is formally reviewed and revised with involvement from stakeholders.	78%	15%	7%	0%	0%
Parents	OKCA’s mission statement is clearly focused on student success.	65%	31%	3%	>1%	1%

*Source: OEQA - OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

**B. ACCOUNTABILITY**

Oklahoma Connections Academy, a nonprofit entity, was granted a charter and is sponsored by the SVCSB to operate OKCA. Composed of five appointed members, the SVCSB is the sole authority to authorize and sponsor full-time statewide virtual charter schools in Oklahoma. Per Title 70 O.S. § 3-145.3, the SVCSB, shall “provide oversight of the operations of statewide virtual charter schools...”

The SVCSB may retain up to five percent of a virtual charter school’s annual state aid allocation for administrative expenses. However, the SVCSB typically has retained three percent. The SVCSB can cease annual collection of this amount once certain SVCSB budget thresholds are met.

Title 70 O.S. § 3-135 states, “The performance provisions within the charter contract shall be based on a performance framework that clearly sets forth the academic and operational performance indicators, measures and metrics that will guide the evaluations of the charter school by the sponsor... The performance framework shall include indicators, measures and metrics for, at a minimum:

1. Student academic proficiency;
2. Student academic growth;
3. Achievement gaps in both proficiency and growth between major student subgroups;



4. Student attendance;
5. Recurrent enrollment from year to year as determined by the methodology used for public schools in Oklahoma;
6. In the case of high schools, graduation rates as determined by the methodology used for public schools in Oklahoma;
7. In the case of high schools, postsecondary readiness;
8. Financial performance and sustainability; and
9. Governing board performance and stewardship, including compliance with all applicable laws, regulations and terms of the charter contract.”

To meet this statute, the SVCSB, as the sponsor of all statewide virtual charter schools, has adopted a performance framework that evaluates three areas of its sponsored schools: (1) Academic Performance; (2) Financial Performance; and (3) Organizational Performance. Certain data are collected relative to each of the three performance areas and are evaluated based on various performance standards. The evaluation of the data determines whether a statewide virtual charter school has met the standards listed in the performance area. If a certain number of standards are met, the SVCSB may decide to renew or modify a sponsored virtual charter school’s contract. Conversely, if a certain number of standards are not met, the SVCSB may decide to terminate, not renew, or modify a sponsored virtual school’s contract. Implementation of this performance framework for OKCA will begin in July 2019.

Title 70 O.S. § 3-137 calls for the Oklahoma State Board of Education (OSBE) beginning in 2016-17 to identify charter schools ranked in the bottom five percent of all public schools in the State’s accountability system. Any charter school in the bottom five percent may be closed by the school’s sponsor. Failure to close such a charter school may lead to OSBE intervention. OKCA has not yet been ranked due to changes in the state’s accountability system.

OKCA is also recognized internationally via its accreditation by Advanced Education, Inc. (AdvancED). Regarding this accreditation, the OKCA website states, “Connections Academy is a division of Connections Education LLC, which is accredited by AdvancED, the national accreditation commission that represents twenty-seven thousand public and private schools and districts across the United States and in sixty-five countries worldwide. Oklahoma Connections Academy is accredited by the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), an accrediting division of AdvancED.”



OKCA is also accredited by the OSBE via annual compliance reviews by Oklahoma State Department of Education (SDE) staff. As part of this accreditation process, a variety of documents and reports are reviewed throughout the school year. Annual recommendations for accreditation statuses are then made to the OSBE.

Connections Academy of Oklahoma, LLC (Connections, LLC) is the charter management organization for OKCA. Connections, LLC is paid for its services by the school district's governing board. The *Educational Products and Services Agreement (Services Agreement)* between the governing board and Connections, LLC, dated March 2014, articulates the educational products and educational services provided by Connections, LLC to OKCA. Amendments to the services agreement were approved by the OKCA governing board in April 2017.

### **C. ENROLLMENT AND DEMOGRAPHICS**

The attendance boundaries of OKCA are the borders of the State of Oklahoma. In other words, any student resident of Oklahoma is eligible to attend OKCA. Title 70 O.S. § 3-135 states, "The [charter school] contract shall incorporate the provisions of the charter of the charter school and contain...the following provisions...Procedures that require students enrolled in the charter school to be selected by lottery to ensure fairness if more students apply than a school has the capacity to accommodate."

Title 70 O.S. § 3-140 states, "A sponsor of a charter school shall not restrict the number of students a charter school may enroll." OKCA has limited enrollment by imposing an enrollment deadline in the fall and spring of each school year. Other virtual charter schools enroll students throughout the school year or have fall enrollment deadlines. For example, Epic Charter School enrolls students throughout the school year, and Oklahoma Virtual Charter Academy enrolls students only in the fall.

OKCA is free to all Oklahoma students. Title 70 O.S. § 3-135 states, "The [charter school] contract shall...contain... Policies that require that the charter school be as equally free and open to all students as traditional public schools." Title 70 O.S. § 3-136 further states, "A charter school may not charge tuition or fees." One caveat, however, is that students enrolled in statewide virtual charter schools cannot participate in any activities administered by the Oklahoma Secondary Schools Activities Association (OSSAA).

The *Services Agreement* between the governing board and Connections, LLC, dated March 2014, states "Any child qualified under the laws of Oklahoma for admission to a public school is eligible to become a Student...subject to verification of their residency...Connections will not charge tuition and shall not charge any other fees unless approved by the Governing Board. The Governing Board may establish a maximum number of Students to be enrolled during each Academic Year and Connections shall not exceed that number without specific approval from the Governing Board...Connections may limit the number of Students in each grade served under this Agreement to conform to the Budget and lottery policy approved by the Governing

Board...Once enrolled, Students will not be required to reapply in subsequent Academic Years, but will need to complete information confirming their intent to return...”

The *Oklahoma Connections Academy School Handbook Supplement 2017-18* states, “Students who are under suspension or who are currently expelled cannot be enrolled at OKCA... Students may enroll after the start of the school year, provided that there is space available in the school at the time of application... students may not be concurrently enrolled in another public school... concurrent enrollment in your local Vocational Technical School or college program is allowed.”

OKCA limits enrollment each school year to help control growth and expenditures while focusing on student achievement. OKCA has deadlines for enrollment in the fall and spring semesters. The deadline for fall enrollment is normally in early October, and the deadline for the spring enrollment is typically in early December. Spring enrollments are limited and capped at the fall enrollment numbers. This is done to match the amount of funding the school district receives based on its first-quarter membership.

**Exhibit 1-2** below shows the fall student enrollment for each Oklahoma virtual charter school for school years 2014-15 to 2017-18. OKCA fall enrollment numbers have increased each year. The most recent enrollment numbers are also the greatest for OKCA.

**Exhibit 1-2**  
**Virtual Charter Schools’ Fall Enrollment**

School Year	OK Connections Academy	Insight School of OK	Epic Charter School	OK Virtual Charter Academy
2014-2015	955	281	4,370	2,518
2015-2016	1,118	346	6,037	2,400
2016-2017	1,246	414	9,077	2,429
2017-2018	1,400	396	8,059	2,234

*Source: SDE*

**Exhibit 1-3** shows the OKCA fall student enrollment and demographic data for school year 2017-18. The school district is divided into three sites for reporting purposes. These data below show that the majority of OKCA students are identified as Caucasian. The next largest identified group is Two or More Races (non-Hispanic).

**Exhibit 1-3  
OKCA Fall Enrollment by Site  
2017-18**

Site	Grade Span	Fall Enrollment	Hispanic	American Indian	Asian	Black	Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	White	Two or More Races
Elementary	K-5	344	12%	8%	0%	11%	1%	57%	11%
Middle	6-8	346	11%	10%	1%	5%	0%	62%	11%
High	9-12	710	8%	10%	1%	5%	<1%	64%	12%
<b>Total</b>	<b>K-12</b>	<b>1,400</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>11%</b>

Source: SDE

**D. ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT**

Title 70 O.S. § 3-135 states, “The [charter school] contract shall...contain...the following provisions...Management and administration of the charter school, including that a majority of the charter governing board members are residents of the State of Oklahoma and meet no less than quarterly in a public meeting within the boundaries of the school district in which the charter school is located or within the State of Oklahoma in the instance of multiple charter school locations by the same sponsor.” This title and section 3-136 further states, “A charter school shall comply with the Oklahoma Open Meeting Act...The governing body of a charter school shall be subject to the same conflict of interest requirements as a member of a local school board.” Since the boundaries of the OKCA are the borders of the State of Oklahoma, its governing board meetings must be held in Oklahoma.

A review of documents on the school district’s website showed that OKCA held eight governing board meetings during the 2017 calendar year. These meetings were held in Tulsa, Oklahoma during the months of January, February, April (Special), May (Special), June, September, October, and November. Agendas and minutes are posted on the OKCA website.

The website states, “You are always welcome to attend Oklahoma Connections Academy board meetings in person. If you wish to address the board and are not able to attend a meeting in person, you will be provided with the opportunity to address the board via telephone.” The *Oklahoma Connections Academy Board of Directors Policy Manual* includes a policy, approved in September 2014, regarding public comments at governing board meetings. It states, “...any individual may address the Board on agenda or non-agenda items during the public comment period as long as they meet any legal provisions governing participation at public meetings. Individuals may present either in-person or by telephone.”

OKCA’s *Financial Statements* from Sanders, Bledsoe, and Hewett, dated June 30, 2016 state, “The governing body of the District is the Board of Education composed of appointed members. The appointed Head of Schools is the executive officer of the school.” The school district’s treasurer is Jack Jenkins, CPA.



The OKCA governing board consists of five members, who are all residents of Oklahoma. Board members serve three-year terms. D’Andre Fisher, Aubrey Lakey, and Charlie Daniels were recently appointed to the governing board. Aubrey Lakey is also a parent of an OKCA student. The most current board members and positions are shown below in **Exhibit 1-4**.

**Exhibit 1-4**  
**Governing Board Members**  
**December 2017**

Name	Position
Bob Sullivan	President
John Tidwell	Vice-President/Secretary
D’Andre Fisher	Board Treasurer/Clerk
Aubrey Lakey	Member
Charlie Daniels	Member

*Source: OKCA Website*

The *Oklahoma Connections Academy Board of Directors Policy Manual* includes a number of sections regarding the governing board. These sections include policies on background checks for board members, code of ethics, and conflict of interest. Regarding board attendance, the manual states, “Board members are expected to demonstrate their commitment to the School by regularly attending Board meetings, except when prevented by unforeseeable events.”

The OKCA governing board pays Connections, LLC for the school district’s staff, and Connections, LLC assumes the responsibility for recruiting, vetting, hiring, evaluating, training, and terminating these staff. As Connections, LLC employees, staff for OKCA receives compensation and benefits through Connections, LLC.

In regard to teaching staff, the *Services Agreement* states, “Connections will employ one or more persons designated as Teachers. Connections shall be responsible for recruiting, training, and assigning Teachers... Connections and the Lead School Administrator will have all day-to-day responsibility for the selection, supervision, oversight, discipline and dismissal of the Teachers.”

In regard to OKCA administration, the *Services Agreement* states, “Connections shall employ one or more persons who shall be designated as the “Principal” of the Charter School. Connections’ selection of the Principal shall be approved by the Governing Board... The Teachers shall report to the Lead School Administrator or such individual as shall have been designated by him or her...”

OKCA has a relatively small administrative team. Four positions provide much of the oversight and leadership for the school district. These positions are Head of Schools, Elementary/Middle School Assistant Principal, High School Assistant Principal, and Manager of Resource Services. **Exhibit 1-5** shows the positions and their responsibilities.

**Exhibit 1-5  
OKCA Administrative Team  
December 2017**

Name	Position	Responsibilities
Tammy Shepherd	Head of Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum, financial, legal, &amp; budget oversight</li> <li>• State reporting &amp; interactions with state agencies</li> <li>• Interactions with governing board &amp; policy development</li> <li>• Supervise other administrative positions</li> </ul>
Jennifer Dewar	Elementary/Middle School Assistant Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate reading sufficiency &amp; gifted &amp; talented</li> <li>• Supervise elementary &amp; middle school staff</li> <li>• Assist with state testing</li> <li>• Engage parents &amp; caretakers</li> <li>• Truancy</li> </ul>
Melissa Gregory	High School Assistant Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervise elementary &amp; middle school staff</li> <li>• Assist with state testing</li> <li>• Engage parents &amp; caretakers</li> <li>• Coordinate graduation</li> <li>• Truancy</li> </ul>
Rebecca James	Manager of Resource Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervise special education staff, 504 students, &amp; Student Intervention Services Program (SISP) Coordinator</li> <li>• Assist with state testing</li> </ul>

*Source: OKCA Internal Document*

OKCA's 2017-18 personnel report shows 49 certified and support staff. **Exhibit 1-6** shows the number of staff by position in 2017-18. Because the staff surveys were completed at a different time than the personnel report, the numbers differ slightly (49 staff on the personnel report compared to 51 respondents on the staff surveys).

**Exhibit 1-6**  
**Number of OKCA Staff by Position**  
**2017-18**

Position	Number
Assistant Principal	2
Counselor	2
Encumbrance Clerk	1
Head of Schools	1
Manager	1
Resource Teacher	5
Secretary	2
Teacher	35

*Source: OKCA Personnel Report*

**Exhibit 1-7** below shows the responses from 51 OKCA staff regarding their length of employment at OKCA. The greatest percentage of respondents have been employed at OKCA from four to five years.

**Exhibit 1-7**  
**Survey Results Regarding Length of Employment**

How long have you been employed by Oklahoma Connections Academy (OKCA)?	
1 year or less	27%
2 to 3 years	29%
4 to 5 years	31%
6 years or more	12%

*Source: OEQA - OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

**Exhibit 1-8** shows the number of staff employed by Connections, LLC to serve OKCA from school year 2014-15 to 2017-18. The number of staff serving OKCA increased each year. Connections, LLC works with OKCA to determine staffing levels based upon enrollment. As enrollment changes, so will the number of staff.

**Exhibit 1-8  
OKCA  
Number of Staff  
2014-15 to 2017-18**

School Year	Staff
2014-2015	37
2015-2016	42
2016-2017	47
2017-2018	49

*Source: OKCA Personnel Report; Communication with School Administration*

**FINDING 1-1**

OKCA staff understands the school district’s organizational and reporting structures regarding job functions. Interviews with teaching and administration staff determined that organizational and reporting structures are clear and well-understood. Roles and responsibilities are delineated and followed.

**Exhibit 1-9** below shows the responses from 51 OKCA staff regarding the organizational and reporting structure. Respondents overwhelmingly *agreed* that they understand the organizational structure and know whom to report to for their job functions.

**Exhibit 1-9  
Survey Results Regarding the Organizational and Reporting Structure**

Survey Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I understand the OKCA’s organizational structure.	72%	24%	4%	0%	0%
I know to whom I report for all my job functions.	91%	7%	2%	0%	0%

*Source: OEQA - OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

**COMMENDATION**

**The OKCA organizational and reporting structures are well-understood by school staff.**

**FINDING 1-2**

The OKCA governing board meets throughout the school year in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Though stakeholders are invited to attend and meeting information is available on the OKCA website, the meetings are not broadcast or recorded in an audio or video format. Holding the meetings in a central location without online streaming or recording, hampers the engagement of interested stakeholders, such as parents living in other parts of the state.

**RECOMMENDATION:****Increase stakeholder engagement in governing board meetings.**

OKCA meets all statutory requirements for governing board meetings. However, stakeholder engagement is minimal because these stakeholders (e.g. parents of OKCA students) live throughout the state and official meeting minutes are the only record of what took place. As a best practice, OKCA could broadcast its governing board meetings live and/or record the meetings and post them on the school district's website. This should result in more stakeholder engagement in the governing process.

A number of districts throughout the state, such as Oklahoma City Public Schools, broadcast their board meetings live. Software can be purchased and used to sync the livestream to the Internet. Others record the meetings and post the audio and video on the district's webpage. There are a number of options the school can explore to implement this recommendation.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

Depending upon the chosen option, this recommendation may be implemented with existing resources.

**FINDING 1-3**

OKCA has a number of documents and processes that require governing board approval. Interviews with governing board members showed that not all members understand various documents and processes. For example, not all governing board members understood the strategic planning and goal setting process. Others were unaware of topics in the *Oklahoma Connections Academy Board of Directors Policy Manual*. Governing board members were also unsure of the competitiveness of the contract with Connections, LLC.

**RECOMMENDATION:****Develop onboarding and refresher training for OKCA governing board members.**

Board membership encompasses a number of varying roles and responsibilities. Traditional public school board members are required to complete a specific number of training hours during their terms. Charter school board members do not have this requirement; however, the SVCSB has worked with the local virtual charter school boards to provide similar training.

OKCA leadership stated that training has been provided in the past that included Connections, LLC staff working with the local governing board. With recently appointed governing board members, OKCA should provide annual onboarding and refresher training to the entire board. This training could include topics, such as comparing the *Services Agreement* with other contracts, the strategic planning process, and board policy.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

**FINDING 1-4**

OKCA governing board members stated that they do not have much opportunity to interact with parents and students. Though parents and students are invited to attend board meetings and provide public comment, they rarely do. OKCA does offer opportunities for staff to interact with parents during field trips and other occasions, but governing board members typically do not attend.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**Create opportunities for governing board members to interact with parents and students.**

Many school boards recognized parents and students at their monthly board meetings. Other times, board members see parents and students at awards assemblies and banquets. These events give an opportunity for board members to interact with parents and students. Obviously, this is not always the case with virtual charter schools.

The OKCA leadership should work with the governing board, parents, students, and staff to create opportunities for the governing board to interact with parents and students. Without violating the Open Meeting Act, the governing board could interact with parents and students at board meetings and other events virtually or in-person. The result should be greater communication, engagement, and transparency.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

Depending upon the chosen option, this recommendation may be implemented with existing resources.

**E. PLANNING AND EVALUATION**



According to interviews and a review of documents, the OKCA strategic planning process begins in the spring of each school year. Goals are developed using parent and staff survey responses and input from local and national Connections, LLC staff. Action plans are created to meet the developed goals. Goal and action plans are shared with staff early in the school year, and revisions are made, if necessary. The goals are then approved by the OKCA governing board. Throughout the school year, the goals and action plans are evaluated, using data, to determine their successful achievement and implementation.

OKCA governing board approved goals for 2017-18 include:

- Meeting or exceeding state average proficiency rates on state assessments
- Increasing proficiency rates of returning students
- Increasing on-time graduation rates
- Increasing positive responses on parent satisfaction surveys

A review of action plans showed detailed instructions for increasing on-time graduation rates and mathematics assessment achievement levels. These action plans included the following prompts:

- What action is needed to accomplish this (goal)
- Suggested things to consider
- How will you measure progress
- Who will be responsible for ensuring this gets done
- What is the timeline for completion

OKCA also has a five-year strategic plan that was submitted to the SVCSB. This strategic plan includes the following four goals:

1. Fifty-one percent of full academic year (FAY) students scoring proficient on state mathematics assessments
2. Fifty-one percent of full academic year (FAY) students scoring proficient on state English/Language Arts assessments
3. Moving students from the unsatisfactory level to higher achievement levels on the state mathematics assessments
4. Moving students from the unsatisfactory level to higher achievement levels on the state English/Language Arts assessments

Beginning in 2019, these expectations will increase as OKCA strives to meet the academic benchmarks of the adopted performance framework. These benchmarks include OKCA students scoring equal to or above the state level of proficiency in Reading/English Language Arts and Math. Subgroups, such as special education students and economically disadvantaged students, must also meet the adopted benchmarks.

**Exhibit 1-10** below shows the responses from 51 OKCA staff and 408 OKCA parents regarding the school district’s goals. A vast majority of OKCA staff and parents believe the school district has an improvement process and/or goals and plans to improve student learning. Few respondents *disagreed* with the survey statements.

**Exhibit 1-10  
Survey Results Regarding Goals**

Group	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Staff	OKCA has a continuous improvement process based on data, goals, actions, and measures for growth.	83%	13%	4%	0%	0%
Parents	OKCA has established goals and a plan for improving student learning.	62%	33%	4%	1%	>1%

*Source: OEQA - OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

The performance of Connections, LLC is evaluated by the OKCA governing board. This evaluation is called a performance review and is defined in the *Services Agreement* as “...review of Connections’ performance under this Agreement, conducted at the Governing Board’s discretion...” Amendments to the *Services Agreement*, approved by the OKCA governing board in April 2017, state that the agreement can be terminated, “if the Governing Board determines, after a Performance Review, in the Charter School’s sole reasonable discretion, that this Agreement should be terminated for failure to perform... The determination as to whether Connections has cured the deficiency shall be made in the sole reasonable discretion of the Charter School...”

**FINDING 1-5**

OKCA has a planning and goal setting process that is formalized and includes stakeholder input. Through surveys and meetings with stakeholders, the OKCA leadership develops goals and action plans for each school year. These goals are then approved and supported by the governing board. Interviewees expressed their understanding and belief in the process. OKCA also has a strategic plan, which is submitted to the SVCSB and reviewed annually.

**COMMENDATION**

**The OKCA planning and goal setting process is formalized and includes stakeholder input.**

**F. HUMAN RESOURCES AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Title 70 O.S. § 3-136 states, “Except as provided for in the Oklahoma Charter Schools Act and its charter, a charter school shall be exempt from all statutes and rules relating to schools, boards of education, and school districts.” This statute has been interpreted to mean that charter schools are not required to necessarily provide the same due process for teachers as other public school districts. Charter school teachers are “at-will” employees like most private sector employees and work at the discretion of the governing board of the school.

However, charter schools are required to maintain certain employee documentation in regard to employee contracts. Title 70 O.S. § 3-135 states the following regarding employee contracts:

A charter school shall not enter into an employment contract with any teacher or other personnel until the charter school has a contract with a sponsoring school district. The employment contract shall set forth the personnel policies of the charter school...The contract shall also specifically set forth the salary, hours, fringe benefits, and work conditions....Upon contracting with any teacher or other personnel, the governing body of the charter school shall, in writing, disclose employment rights of the employees in the event the charter school closes or the charter is not renewed.

Title 70 O.S. § 3-136 further states, “Employees of a charter school may participate as members of the Teachers' Retirement System of Oklahoma in accordance with applicable statutes and rules if otherwise allowed pursuant to law...A charter school may participate in all health and related insurance programs available to the employees of the sponsor of the charter school.”

In the case of OKCA, all employees are employed by Connections, LLC and are not included in the Oklahoma Teachers Retirement System. However, Connections, LLC employees have access to health insurance and a defined contribution retirement plan. A sample Connections, LLC

employment letter states, “As a full-time employee of Connections Education, you will be eligible to participate in our employee benefits program on the first day of the month following 30 days of employment. You will be eligible to participate in Connections Academy’s 401(k) plan after 60 days of employment.”

The *Employee Handbook*, dated April 2017, covers a variety of topics regarding employment by Connections, LLC. The handbook includes sections on background checks, promotions, leave, and benefits. The handbook states, “We have created these policies for all staff of Connections Education to include Connections Learning, Connections Academy and any Connections Academy affiliated school. These policies have been prepared for all full-time and part-time employees, unless otherwise noted herein.”

Some, but not all, Connections, LLC staff work from home. Others work some days in the central office in Bartlesville, Oklahoma and other days from home. While still others work every day in the central office. Most staff work 195 days per year. The *Employee Handbook* articulates the expectations for each of these working environments and schedules. The handbook states, “Under certain circumstances, employees who would normally work out of a company office may be eligible to work at home on a full-time, part-time, or occasional basis.”

OKCA staff are regularly evaluated. Interviewees stated that they are evaluated by their supervisor and understand the evaluation process. **Exhibit 1-11** shows 51 OKCA staff responses regarding evaluations. Staff overwhelmingly *agreed* that they receiving training on the evaluation instrument and are regularly evaluated.

**Exhibit 1-11**  
**Staff Survey Results Regarding Evaluations**

Survey Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I received adequate training on the teacher/leader evaluation instrument OKCA has adopted.	67%	24%	7%	2%	0%
OKCA’s principals regularly evaluate staff members on the adopted evaluation criteria designed to improve teaching and learning.	80%	17%	2%	0%	0%

*Source: OEQA - OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

Staff evaluation instruments rate teachers and administrators using the following four-leveled scale:

1. Ineffective
2. Needs Improvement
3. Effective
4. Highly Effective

The OKCA administrator evaluation instrument includes the following four areas:

1. Personal Development and Professional Skills
2. School Development and Leadership
3. Student Achievement/Data Management
4. Team Development and Leadership

The OCKA special education teacher evaluation instrument includes the following six areas:

1. Collaborate and Develop Professionally
2. Communication, Documentation and Contacts
3. Ensure High Quality Instruction
4. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Compliance
5. Monitor Student Performance
6. Personalize Students' Programs

The OCKA teacher evaluation instrument includes the following six areas:

1. Collaborate and Develop Professionally
2. Communication, Documentation and Contacts
3. Ensure High Quality Instruction
4. Monitor Student Performance
5. Personalize Students' Programs
6. Monitor Student Participation

Regarding Work-at-Home employees, the *Employee Handbook* states, "Evaluation of an employee's performance while working at home may include daily interaction by phone and email. Evaluations will be similar in content and frequency to the evaluations received by employees at the assigned office location, but with additional focus on work output and the completion of objectives, and less focus on time-based performance."

Though the OKCA staff are employees of Connections LLC, their performance can be evaluated by the OKCA governing board. Regarding teachers, the *Services Agreement* states, "The Governing Board may, at any time, request that the Lead School Administrator promptly investigate and take action to address any complaints or concerns regarding the performance or conduct of any Teacher...the Governing Board may require the removal or replacement of a Teacher within sixty (60) days of any written request or immediately upon written notice in the event the Governing Board believes there is a risk of any illegal conduct, or a risk to the health or safety of any Student, and so notifies Connections in writing."

Regarding the evaluation of the principal (also called Head of Schools), the *Services Agreement* states, "The Governing Board shall participate annually in Connections' evaluation of the Principal. The Governing Board shall have the right to request that Connections replace the Lead School Administrator, in the event that the Governing Board is dissatisfied with his or her performance, and so notifies Connections in writing..." Governing board members stated that the Head of Schools is annually evaluated.

Connections, LLC employees are at-will employees. The *Employee Handbook* states, “Employment can be terminated by either the employee or the employer at any time, for any reason, with or without notice.” This is different than traditional public schools, where certified and support staff have a variety of protections and processes related to employment and termination.

Job descriptions have been created for a variety of positions. These descriptions included a company description, summary of position responsibilities, requirements, and physical demands. As an example, the secondary teacher job description includes requirements, such as certified, technology skills, flexibility, and ability to work remotely.

Professional development is offered throughout the school year in a variety of formats. These formats comprise in-person training, train-the-trainer, and synchronous web-based training. Training includes sessions for new and experienced on-line teachers. Training is mandatory for new teachers.

The *Services Agreement* states, “...Board Members, Administrative Staff, the Special Education Director and Teachers... will be trained in Connections protocols and other best practices... Connections will make available to Charter School Staff continuing professional development and other related training, leadership development and peer to peer networking opportunities... All costs associated with such Training shall be paid out of the fee for Educational Services paid to Connections...”

#### **FINDING 1-6**

Though not required by statute, OKCA strives to have Oklahoma-certified teaching staff serve its students. The *Services Agreement* states, “All Teachers shall hold a valid Oklahoma teaching certificate... These requirements may be waived by the Governing Board... only with respect to electives, where there is no Oklahoma certified Teacher available to teach a Course.”

The *Employee Handbook* states, “Some employees, as a condition of employment, must maintain a valid credential. This includes teachers and most school administrators.”

70 O.S. § 3-136 states, “Except as provided for in the Oklahoma Charter Schools Act and its charter, a charter school shall be exempt from all statutes and rules relating to schools, boards of education, and school districts”. This has been interpreted to mean that charter schools are not required to hire certified staff, as certified staff are not mentioned in the Oklahoma Charter School Act.

70 O.S. § 3-135 states, “A charter school shall not enter into an employment contract with any teacher or other personnel until the charter school has a contract with a sponsoring school district. The employment contract shall set forth the personnel policies of the charter school, including, but not limited to, policies related to certification, professional development, evaluation, suspension, dismissal and nonreemployment, sick leave, personal business leave, emergency leave, and family and medical leave”. The “policies related to certification” language shows that charter schools can employ certified staff, but certification requirements are to be based upon the school’s policies.

**COMMENDATION**

**OKCA strives to have an Oklahoma-certified teaching staff to serve its students.**

**FINDING 1-7**

OKCA offers robust professional development for its staff. Connections Education, LLC’s professional learning model has been recognized nationally for its best practices. Recognition includes a silver award from the United States Distance Learning Association. Staff can take a series of sessions that include topics, such as connecting with students and teachers, the power of vocabulary, engagement, and emotional intelligence. Other professional development resources are available via the Teacher Central website hosted by Connections Education, LLC.

**Exhibit 1-12** shows responses from 51 OKCA staff regarding professional development. A vast majority *agreed* that staff participates in professional learning and professional development is designed to increase effectiveness of staff. Interviews supported these survey results.

**Exhibit 1-12**  
**Staff Survey Results Regarding Professional Development**

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
In OKCA, all staff members participate in continuous professional learning based on identified needs of the students and teachers.	76%	22%	0%	0%	2%
In OKCA, the professional development program is designed to increase effectiveness among all professional staff members.	69%	29%	2%	0%	0%

*Source: OEQA - OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

**COMMENDATION**

**OKCA provides a robust professional development program to its staff.**

**FINDING 1-8**

Interviews with staff determined there is some confusion regarding the school district’s salary schedule. Interviewed teaching staff stated that they had not seen nor were they aware of an official salary schedule. Human Resource staff stated that a salary schedule did exist. A review of documents showed that information regarding raises and bonuses are included in the *Employee Handbook*, but a salary schedule was not included.

Regarding bonuses, the *Employee Handbook* states, “Full-time school staff level employees are typically eligible for a bonus incentive calculated as a percentage of their annual salary, including career ladder compensation and other bonus eligible earnings. The percentage is

determined based upon years of service. In the first year, school staff level employees are eligible for a 4% percent bonus; which increases to 5% in the second year, 8% in the fifth year and 10% in the tenth year of service.”

Human Resource interviewees stated that the Oklahoma minimum teaching salary for public schools and salaries of surrounding districts are used as a guide to set salaries. Human Resources staff stated that the average teacher’s salary at OKCA was approximately \$40,000 per year. Teacher interviewees noted that they were able to negotiate to some degree for their starting salary. A review of payroll documents showed that teachers receive between \$32,000 and \$75,000 per year. These amounts are determined by starting salary, bonuses, raises, years of experience, and credentials.

A salary schedule is not included in the *Oklahoma Connections Academy Board of Directors Policy Manual*, but the compensation for Principal of the School (called Head of Schools in other documents) is discussed. The manual states, “As part of the budget process, and/or at the time of hiring or increasing the compensation of the Principal of the School, the Board will review a comparison of salaries for chief executives (principal, director, administrator, etc.) at other similar schools and make a determination, to be recorded in the minutes of the Board, that the proposed compensation is reasonable.”

Connections, LLC provides Oklahoma certified staff to OKCA, and these staff members live in Oklahoma. Charter schools are not required to follow the state’s minimum teaching salary requirements; thus, charter school teachers can be paid below or well above state minimums. However, most charter schools seek to be competitive in regard to teacher salaries with the traditional public schools.

**Exhibit 1-13** below shows the responses from 51 OKCA staff regarding the salary schedule and payment of stipends. A majority of the respondents *agreed* that they understand the salary schedule and justification for payment of performance stipends. Teachers interviewed noted that they did understand the raise and bonus structure even if they were not aware of the salary schedule.

**Exhibit 1-13**  
**Staff Survey Results Related to Salary and Performance Stipends**

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I understand my contract with OKCA as it relates to my salary schedule and benefits or justification for paying performance stipends.	87%	11%	2%	0%	0%

*Source: OEQA – OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

**RECOMMENDATION**

**Communicate the salary schedule to current and prospective employees.**



OKCA desires to provide its students with the most qualified teaching staff available. Interviews showed that OKCA has not had difficulty in filling vacant positions. Still, communicating the salary schedule may help fill positions and retain staff in the future. The OKCA leadership should communicate the salary schedule to current and prospective employees via the handbook or website.

## FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

## G. COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

OKCA communicates with its stakeholders (e.g. parents, students, staff, etc.) through a variety of methods. The school district uses handbooks, email, newsletters, message boards, phone, and instant messenger. Staff, parents, and students also interact face-to-face during meetings, field trips, and other activities.

The *Connections Academy School Handbook General Portion 2017-18* states, “Connections Academy expects that most students will have daily contact with their teachers through a combination of phone calls, WebMail messages, LiveLesson sessions, face-to-face interaction, and the daily review of assessments via the electronic Grade Book.” The *Employee Handbook* notes, “As a productivity enhancement tool, the organization encourages the business use of electronic communications (including phone, voicemail, e-mail, webmail, message boards, instant message and fax).”

**Exhibit 1-14** below shows the responses from 51 OKCA staff regarding the communication. Staff overwhelmingly *agreed* that administration communicates with staff and staff communicates with parents. No respondent *disagreed* with the survey statements.

**Exhibit 1-14**  
**Staff Survey Results Related to Communication**

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The central office is accessible and effectively communicates with district staff.	80%	17%	2%	0%	0%
My Principal is accessible and effectively communicates with staff.	65%	28%	7%	0%	0%
OKCA staff and administrators often use email or other social media to communicate with one another.	87%	11%	2%	0%	0%
Staff effectively communicates with parents.	74%	26%	0%	0%	0%

*Source: OEQA – OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

**Exhibit 1-15** below shows the responses from 408 OKCA parents regarding the communication. The majority of parents *agreed* that OKCA effectively communicates with them. Few respondents *disagreed* with the survey statement.

**Exhibit 1-15  
Parent Survey Results Related to Communication**

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
OKCA effectively communicates with parents.	63%	31%	4%	1%	1%

*Source: OEQA – OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

A number of handbooks provide information to governing board members, staff, parents, and students. OKCA provides the following handbooks and manuals to its stakeholders:

- Employee Handbook, board approved in April 2017
- Board of Directors Policy Manual
- Connections Academy School Handbook General Portion 2017-18
- School Handbook Supplement 2017-18

**Exhibit 1-16** below shows the responses from 51 staff, 408 parents, and 419 students regarding their pertinent handbooks. The majority of respondents *agreed* that the handbooks are easily understood. Few respondents had *no opinion* or *disagreed* with the survey statements.

**Exhibit 1-16  
Survey Results Related to Handbooks**

Group	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Staff	The staff handbook is easily understood.	67%	24%	9%	0%	0%
Parents	The student handbook is easily understood.	58%	37%	5%	0%	0%
Students	The student handbook is easily understood.	40%	55%	NA	4%	>1%

*Source: OEQA – OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

An internal document from OKCA discusses community involvement. The document states, “In a traditional school environment, community would be defined as businesses within or citizens living in or near the school’s district of residence. At OKCA our district of residence is defined as the boundaries of the state of Oklahoma. As such, our efforts toward community involvement become focused more on those families directly involved with our school or those outside our school who have an interest in being involved...”

OKCA’s efforts include appointing governing board members from across Oklahoma. OKCA maintains a parent teacher organization called, Club Orange. Community Coordinators help to coordinate events for OKCA stakeholders. These coordinators are parents or guardians of OKCA

students. OKCA also asks that stakeholders serve on various committees and participate in surveys.

**Exhibit 1-17** below shows the responses from 51 staff and 408 parents regarding their input. The majority of respondents *agreed* that the handbooks are easily understood. Few respondents had *no opinion* or *disagreed* with the survey statements.

**Exhibit 1-17**  
**Survey Results Related to Stakeholder Input**

Group	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Staff	Staff input is sought and validated by school leadership.	62%	33%	0%	2%	2%
Parents	Parental input is sought and validated by the school.	60%	34%	5%	1%	>1%

*Source: OEQA – OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

Field trips are an important aspect of OKCA’s sense of community. The same internal document referenced above states, “We schedule 2-3 field trips monthly across the state at a variety of venues and encourage families including siblings and extended family members to attend. We encourage them to get to know other families in our OKCA community and to make long lasting connections.”

OKCA’s newsletters listed the many field trips offered throughout the year. The September 2017 newsletter listed field trips in Edmond and Tulsa, Oklahoma. Another field trip included digging for selenite crystals near Jet, Oklahoma. A fall newsletter listed a field trip to the Woolaroc Museum and Wildlife Preserve near Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

**Field Trips**

What: Woolaroc Museum and Wildlife Preserve  
 Where: Woolaroc Woolaroc Ranch Rd. Bartlesville, OK  
 When: Thursday, 9 November 2017 10:30 AM  
 Who: All OKCA Families  
 Cost: Children under 11 are free.  
 \$5/person over the age of 11 as long as we have at least 20 people going.  
 \$12/person over the age of 11 if we do not have 20 people joining us for the trip.  
 RSVP: Using the Google form please reply by 6 November. We need to give them a headcount.  
[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1n6C1v8DQ\\_4vS516l9a55Gsdz7\\_0T4F3Cq4y0KTOhna](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1n6C1v8DQ_4vS516l9a55Gsdz7_0T4F3Cq4y0KTOhna)

Join us for a walk through the Western museum and then a picnic lunch. Visit the petting zoo and maybe even take a nature hike (weather permitting).  
 “Hidden away in the rugged Osage Hills of Northeastern Oklahoma, Woolaroc was established in 1925 as the ranch retreat of oilman Frank Phillips. The ranch is a 3,700 acre wildlife preserve, home to many species of native and exotic wildlife, such as buffalo, elk and longhorn cattle. Woolaroc is also a museum with an outstanding collection of western art and artifacts, Native American material, one of the finest collections of Colt firearms in the world, and so much more.  
 With its wildlife preserve, rustic lodge, outstanding museum and rugged natural environment, perhaps the vision of Woolaroc can best be summed up in Frank Phillips’ own words: ‘This isn’t all a dream about something, but a place where I can get back to nature. The great difficulty with the American people today is that they are getting too far away from the fundamental things in life. Too much time and money are spent on things which leave no record and which add nothing basically to the present nor to the future. To build permanently and wisely is to benefit all mankind. The conservation of wildlife now will mean much to future generations.’”  
 Taken from <https://www.woolaroc.org/pages/about-us>

Please visit this website for Woolaroc to see specific directions for getting to Woolaroc. They do not recommend using a GPS to locate the ranch.  
 When you get to the ranch you will have to pay from your vehicle before driving up to the museum. Please be sure to tell the admissions worker that you are with Oklahoma Connections Academy




**11**

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**Exhibit 1-18** below shows the responses from 419 OKCA students regarding interactions between them. The majority of students *agreed* that they had opportunities to engage with other students. Some respondents *disagreed* with the survey statement.

**Exhibit 1-18  
Parent Survey Results Related to Communication**

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I have opportunities to engage with other students at OKCA.	24%	60%	NA	11%	5%

*Source: OEQA – OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

**FINDING 1-9**

OKCA effectively communicates with its stakeholders. Interviews, survey results, and a review of documents show that OKCA is purposeful and consistent in its communication with staff, parents, and students. Through a variety of avenues, OKCA maintains two-way communication.

**COMMENDATION**

**OKCA effectively communicates with its stakeholders.**

**FINDING 1-10**

OKCA staff, parents, and students are able to interact during multiple and diverse field trips. Field trips are held monthly throughout Oklahoma. Parents, students, teachers, and family members can attend these trips. These trips allow for stakeholders to interact and help to build a sense of community at this virtual charter school.

**COMMENDATION**

**OKCA builds a sense of community through multiple and diverse field trips.**

**FINDING 1-11**

Though OKCA strives to provide numerous interactive events, interviews and survey results indicated many parents and students desire more activities designed so that parents and students can connect with their contemporaries. OKCA makes an effort in this regard with field trips, prom, committee meetings, and lessons.

Current Oklahoma statute and administrative code limits the activities in which virtual charter school students can participate. Title 70 O.S. § 3-145.3 states, “Students enrolled full-time in a statewide virtual charter school sponsored by the Statewide Virtual Charter School Board shall not be authorized to participate in any activities administered by the Oklahoma Secondary Schools Activities Association. However, the students may participate in intramural activities

sponsored by a statewide virtual charter school, an online provider for the charter school or any other outside organization.” Furthermore, Oklahoma Administrative Code (OAC) 777:10-5-3 states, “No statewide virtual charter school or employee of the statewide virtual charter school shall provide face-to-face instruction to any charter school student unless...The instruction is limited to no more than nine (9) hours per week of instruction per student.”

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

**Using stakeholder input, create more opportunities for students and parents to interact and work together.**

OKCA should work with parents, students, and staff to design opportunities that engage students and parents in group activities. These activities could include extracurricular events, community-based volunteer projects, and lesson plans that incorporate team building and group input.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

Depending upon the chosen option, this recommendation may be implemented with existing resources.



*Chapter 2:*  
*Instructional Delivery*

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## Chapter 2

# *Instructional Delivery*

This chapter addresses the instructional delivery system of Oklahoma Connections Academy (OKCA) in the following sections:

- A. Professional Learning Community
- B. Curriculum
- C. Instructional Delivery
- D. Student Performance
- E. Special Programs
- F. Student Services

The primary purpose of school districts – whether charter, virtual charter, or traditional brick and mortar – is to educate all students ensuring each learner has an equal opportunity to successfully enter college/career training, and/or the workforce. Many studies have documented the characteristics of effective schools. *School improvement* research has been conducted largely within the past 20-25 years and is primarily descriptive based on case studies. These studies indicate that effective schools deliver quality instruction based upon a district’s capacity to manage and implement challenging and relevant curriculum.<sup>1</sup>

The Office of Educational Quality & Accountability (OEQA) believes the education process requires strongly formed policies and procedures that direct the instructional process, provides well-designed programs to meet the needs of all students, and delivers resources to support program implementation. Also, essential to the education process is the monitoring and evaluation of program effectiveness based upon the PK-12 journey outcomes and student performance data.

### **A. PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY**

Through ample educational research over the years, it has been confirmed that when schools and districts effectively implement professional learning communities (PLC) there is considerable improvement in student learning as well as adult learning (Annenberg, 2014<sup>2</sup>; Leana, 2011<sup>3</sup>). Although the PLC concept has been misinterpreted and defined differently in multiple contexts, OEQA has adopted the definition provided by DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many (2008)<sup>4</sup>:

PLCs are defined as educators committed to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve. Professional learning communities operate under the assumption that

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.k12.wa.us/research/pubdocs/DistrictImprovementReport.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://annenberginstitute.org/sites/default/files/product/270/files/ProfLearning.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Leana, C. (2011). The Missing Link in School Reform.

[http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/the\\_missing\\_link\\_in\\_school\\_reform/](http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/the_missing_link_in_school_reform/)

<sup>4</sup> Dufour, DuFour, and Eaker. *Revisiting Professional Learning Communities at Work: New Insights for Improving Schools*, Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press, 2008

the key to improved learning for students is continuous, job-embedded learning for educators. (p. 14)

Within the context of this definition, virtual charter schools should create the structures for the successful implementation of PLCs by providing the time, space, expectations, accountability, and leadership needed for overall school improvement. Research has shown that when the relationships among teachers in a school are characterized by high trust and frequent interaction—that is, when social capital is strong—student achievement scores improve (Leana). DuFour, et al. (2008) suggested six characteristics that contribute to successful PLCs.

- Shared vision, mission, values, and goals focused on student learning
- A collaborative culture with a focus on learning
- Collective inquiry into best practice and current reality
- Action orientation – learning by doing
- A commitment to continuous improvement
- Results orientation – based on results rather than intention or assumptions

Creating strong professional learning communities holds several potential advantages for schools and districts, but also for virtual charter school districts. Among the positive outcomes reported in the research are: increased efficacy, both collectively and individually; collective responsibility for student learning; reduction in teacher isolation; substantial learning about good teaching and increased content knowledge; higher morale, greater job satisfaction, greater teacher retention rates, and enthusiasm (Annenberg, 2004). Based on these findings and the benefits of PLCs, it is important to commend districts who actively promote these communities in their schools and to support districts that are involved in the earlier stages of PLC development.

## FINDING 2-1

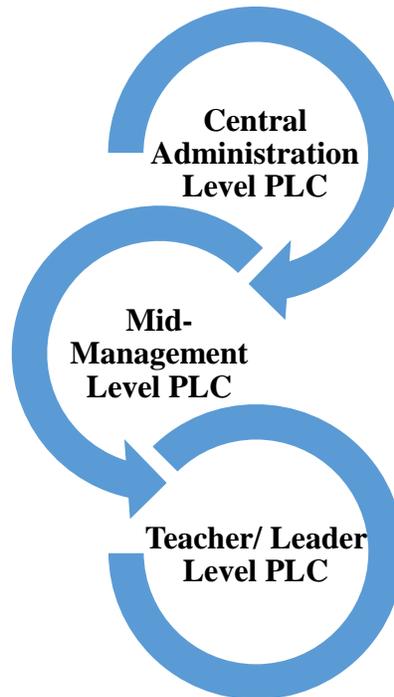
OKCA administration and staff have strong beliefs in the importance of a virtual school having a collaborative culture. The collective results of several studies suggest that well-developed PLCs have a positive impact on both teaching practice and student achievement.<sup>5</sup> During interviews and focus group discussions, the teachers described their own culture as one that encourages teachers to work together to address common issues such as student learning, teaching strategies and curriculum resources. This belief and action was especially expressed and modeled by the leadership staff.

OKCA central administration successfully demonstrates professional learning communities at all levels, specifically at the administrative level. The administrative team joins the Head of School almost daily to review critical indicators such as student performance and student engagement. Likewise, the two assistant principals meet with their respective teacher teams weekly to review student data while strategically developing an *Issue Aware* (IA) and/or action plans in response to the data. OKCA's PLC approach is best understood and presented in **Exhibit 2-1**. This exhibit

<sup>5</sup> Teaching and Teacher Education 24 (2008) 80–91 [http://ac.els-cdn.com/S0742051X07000066/1-s2.0-S0742051X07000066-main.pdf?\\_tid=1075418a-f3be-11e6-a27c-00000aacb362&acdnat=1487191012\\_7a762d4c8dc29d15c8f79d96489ed296](http://ac.els-cdn.com/S0742051X07000066/1-s2.0-S0742051X07000066-main.pdf?_tid=1075418a-f3be-11e6-a27c-00000aacb362&acdnat=1487191012_7a762d4c8dc29d15c8f79d96489ed296)

provides a picture of the sequential collaborative events that operate within OKCA's professional learning community to promote school improvement.

**Exhibit 2-1**  
**Representation of OKCA's PLC Approach**



*BDLC – Sequential PLC Model (2017)*

OKCA adopted the DuFour PLC model at the onset and has been intentional in using Title II funding to ensure all staff members receive training. The DuFour model training is disseminated through conferences offered by Solution Tree. OKCA sends new teachers each year to these conferences for PLC training.

**Exhibit 2-2** presents the OKCA staff survey results related to PLC participation and training. The results indicated that 98 percent of survey participants *agree* or *strongly agree* that teachers participate in PLCs that meet online or in person. Only 2 percent had *no opinion*. Of the 51 participants taking the survey 98% percent were certified staff. This data conveys that most or all of the certified staff are involved in collaborative efforts within the OKCA professional learning community. Additionally, it is noted that 97 percent of survey participants *agree* or *strongly agree* that OKCA teachers have been trained in the PLCs process that promotes discussion about student learning.

**Exhibit 2-2**  
**OKCA Staff Survey Results Related to PLC Participation and Training**

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Teachers participate in professional learning communities that meet online or in person.	83%	15%	2%	0%	0%
Teachers in OKCA have been trained in the professional learning communities (PLC) process that promotes discussion about student learning.	80%	17%	2%	0%	0%

*Source: OEQA - OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

### COMMENDATION

**OKCA leadership understands the value of a professional learning community for continuous school improvement by ensuring all staff receive professional training in PLC processes thus promoting fidelity in the implementation of this evidenced-based practice.<sup>6</sup>**

### FINDING 2-2

OKCA has intentionally structured time and space/place for teachers to collaborate with the purpose of learning and growing within a professional learning community. These meetings are simultaneously convened using both face-to-face and virtual venues. PLC collaborative time is focused on students at risk by digging into the data through an analytic process. PLC collaborative time occurs frequently within content areas and vertical teams. The special education teachers are very much a part of this collaborative effort.

### COMMENDATION

**OKCA is commended for creating the structures needed for successful implementation of PLCs by providing time, space, expectations, and leadership that positively impacts teaching practice and student achievement for overall school improvement.**

### FINDING 2-3

OEQA consultants noted from focus group discussions, the various procedures and processes implemented for each school level's collaborative PLC time. The expectations and procedures for elementary school collaborative meetings are different than middle school, which is then also different than high school. Some adhere to an agenda, while others do not. According to the survey results and focus group feedback, all feel the meetings are relevant, but not all meetings, outside of the 'data-dig' aspect of the meetings, operate with a consistent focus. Without formalizing the collaborative process by including essential accountability tools then any

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.calpro-online.org/pubs/evidencebasedprofessionalllearning.pdf>

meetings occurring with informal efforts will be limited in producing the critical growth needed in student achievement and teacher development.

One of the important aspects any virtual charter should consider in ensuring a productive PLC is to create effective structures for the initiative. To accomplish this mission, the school leaders must take the lead on examining what structures are currently in place and/or not in place to support frequent formalized collaboration opportunities among staff. Structural elements that should be considered to ensure successful implementation may include:

- **Values & Beliefs** – what we believe and aspire to make happen
- **Procedures** – expectations, norms, agendas, accountabilities
- **Time** – specific time delegated weekly for collaborative teams
- **Space** – designated data rooms, meeting rooms
- **Materials** – formative assessments, multiple sets of data
- **Technologies** – software/programs to support PLC actions

OKCA is commended on having most of these structures in place. However, *procedures* appear to be an element that is less formalized in this line-up. Common norms, agendas, and accountabilities that are adhered to for each meeting should be the centerpiece that provides common understanding and guidance.

## RECOMMENDATION

**OKCA leaders should formalize the PLC collaboration process by incorporating common procedures that will maintain focus and create stability for each meeting. Well-developed PLC collaborative time drives improvement of student achievement and contributes to the professional growth of teachers.**

The consulting team noted some common values shared by the OKCA staff such as all students deserve to be treated with dignity and respect and should be taught by a teacher that cares about their achievement. Further, this staff values the importance of working together as a team and are committed to continuous improvement. Building on this foundation, adding tools to equip their time together certainly strengthens the outcomes.

In the past decade there has occurred a deeper understanding of what steps and procedures should be in place in moving teachers from isolation or even from a collaborative “hit and miss” approach to a more structured result-oriented event.<sup>7</sup> Providing only the element of time for teachers to meet is not sufficient and will not affect school improvement if the focus is on issues that do not directly impact student learning. When school leaders consider a procedural approach that is focused on student learning and purposeful strategies then educators will engage in collaboration that impacts both students and adult learning.<sup>8</sup>

OKCA staff should consider developing agreed upon norms that are drafted by the group to follow each meeting. Norms make collaboration and group meetings more effective by guiding

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<sup>7</sup> DuFour, et. al., (2008). Revisiting Professional Learning Communities at Work.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

team behavior. Adopting norms enable team members to hold each other accountable for any behavior that is negatively impacting the success of the team. Some of the collaborative teams had clearly assigned roles and responsibilities to help the team build internal capacity for planning and holding effective and focused meetings.<sup>9</sup> Yet, based on interviews, this was not consistent throughout.

Next, there should be an emphasis to facilitate team meetings that are conducted based on best practices that produce optimal gains for both teachers and students. Again, this appeared to be the practice among some, but not all. OKCA should craft procedures for successful facilitation during team meetings where the principal is meeting with her staff. This can be accomplished with implementing expectations and attainable outcomes for each collaborative team meeting that is guided with a structured agenda. Although it should be consistent and structured, the agenda should be non-restrictive to the degree that it will allow for engagement of all participants.

Another procedural element that might be considered is a form of feedback. Such an accountability component to ensure and safeguard fidelity of the collaborative meetings would benefit all participants. The feedback form could be disseminated at the end of each PLC meeting with a link to gauge effectiveness of the session and to plan appropriately for upcoming sessions. A sample that OKCA may want to consider is provided in **Exhibit 2-3**.

### Exhibit 2-3

#### PLC Faculty Feedback Survey

##### What We Accomplished Today!

(Check all that apply)

1. Examined and analyzed student achievement and classroom data to make decisions \_\_\_
2. Selected specific areas to investigate as a focus for changing practice \_\_\_
3. Investigated research and best practices relevant to our students' performance \_\_\_
4. Shared new strategies or changed existing practices that effect classroom learning \_\_\_
5. Shared personal practices and expertise through reflective dialogue, analysis of student work, and observe each other's classroom practices \_\_\_
6. Documented activities and results \_\_\_
7. Functioned effectively as a team \_\_\_

*BDLC (2018)*

Another survey approach could compose of a simple rating form that solicits the participants' views on criteria such as shown in **Exhibit 2-3** above. This survey (**Exhibit 2-4**) allows the participants to rate the effectiveness of that day's PLC session based on all seven criteria points using a three-point scale.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.schoolimprovementcoach.org/manual/7%20Norms%20and%20Roles.pdf>

**Exhibit 2-4  
Sample Item from PLC Faculty Feedback Form**

**How did we do today?**

Examined and analyzed student achievement and classroom data to make decisions:

- a. Effective and useful
- b. Not extremely effective not very useful
- c. Not effective not useful

**FISCAL IMPACT**

This recommendation may be implemented with existing resources.

**FINDING 2-4**

Interview dialogue from focus groups and survey results revealed that OKCA facilitates a rich process for mentoring or coaching new teachers while also ensuring that all teachers receive adequate onboarding training. There was 100 percent agreement among survey participants that teachers receive mentoring/coaching opportunities for acclimating to the online environment. Additionally, 98 percent of staff survey respondents *strongly agree* or *agree* that they receive adequate training overall to perform their job functions (**Exhibit 2-5**).

**Exhibit 2-5  
Staff Survey Related to Mentoring/Training**

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
In OKCA, new staff members receive mentoring/peer coaching to acclimate to the online environment.	83%	17%	0%	0%	0%
I receive adequate training overall to perform my job functions.	78%	20%	2%	0%	0%

*Source: OEQA - OKCA Staff Survey Results (2017)*

As required by HB 2885 (2014) all new teachers (defined as one in an instructional capacity, counselor, librarian or nurse §70-6-101.3.) must participate in a residency program starting in school year 2015-2016. However, this does not apply to charter schools. As best practice in a virtual charter school environment this should also include *any teacher new* to the virtual platform.

In light of the state’s teacher shortage, mentoring/coaching should be considered as a high priority. A trend recently discovered in studies conducted in the past few years, reveals teacher attrition – teachers leaving teaching, is especially high in the first years on the job. Several studies have estimated that between 40% and 50% of new teachers leave within the first five

years of entry into teaching. Moreover, the attrition rates of first-year teachers have increased by about one-third in the past two decades. So, not only are there far more beginners in the teaching force, but these beginners are less likely to stay in teaching. In short, both the number and instability of beginning teachers have been increasing in recent years.<sup>10</sup>

## COMMENDATION

**OKCA implements a strategic onboarding plan for all new teachers that ensures smooth transition with effective training, mentoring, and coaching.**

### **B. CURRICULUM**

Oklahoma state education laws, as codified in the Oklahoma Administrative Code (210 § 15), manage the instructional process to ensure academic success for all students. It is the responsibility of the virtual charter district to meet the requirements of the law as they apply. A district's instructional program, along with its allocation of resources, is how a district attempts to meet the educational needs of all students. A well designed and managed process for developing curriculum and directing instruction, collecting assessment data to evaluate and monitor programs, and providing the resources needed to support educational efforts are essential if a district is to meet the needs of its students.

Curriculum development and instructional delivery are critical components of student learning. The presentation of materials, concepts, skills, and new ideas greatly affect the acquisition of knowledge. Curriculum content and instructional strategies need proper alignment and regularly scheduled evaluations. This promotes improvement of student performance and ensures curricular relevance, rigor, and equity.

Oklahoma school governing boards and superintendents, whether traditional or charter, provide principals and teachers with necessary tools to deliver the state adopted standards. The Oklahoma Academic Standards (OAS) should guide the educational delivery. With the recent adoption of OAS, educators are encouraged to reshape their educational efforts by integrating rigorous instruction with the goal that such efforts will redefine what performing at a high level looks like and students are college and career ready.

OAS provides a consistent, clear articulation of learning expectations, guides teacher instruction, and assists parents in knowing what they need to do to help with the educational process. The academic state standards are intended to mirror the robust, relevant; real-world knowledge and skills students will need for successful transition into post-secondary institutions and/or careers. OAS defines the content, knowledge, and skills students should gain during their K-12 educational career. OAS prepares high school graduates for success in college courses and in workforce environments. **Exhibit 2-6** further explains what Oklahoma Academic Standards *do* and *don't do*.

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<sup>10</sup> [http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2012/05/16/kappan\\_ingersoll.h31.html?print=1](http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2012/05/16/kappan_ingersoll.h31.html?print=1)

**Exhibit 2-6  
Newly Adopted (2016) Oklahoma Academic Standards**

What Oklahoma Academic Standards Do	What Oklahoma Academic Standards Do Not Do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do focus on deep thinking, conceptual understanding, and real-world problem-solving skills</li> <li>• Do set expectations for students to be College, Career, and Citizenship ready</li> <li>• Do incorporate literacy in science, Social Studies, and Technical Subjects</li> <li>• Do emphasize the use of citations and examples from texts when creating opinions and arguments</li> <li>• Do increase rigor and grade-level expectations</li> <li>• Do determine the full range of support for English Language Learners and Students with Special Needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not dictate how teachers should teach</li> <li>• Do not mandate a specific curriculum</li> <li>• Do not limit advanced work beyond the standards</li> <li>• Do not require the purchase or development of entirely new instructional materials</li> <li>• Do not prescribe all that can or should be taught</li> <li>• Do not limit efforts to prepare students for college, career, or citizenship readiness</li> <li>• Do not prescribe interventions for students below grade-level</li> </ul>

*Source: SDE, Updated May 2016*

**FINDING 2-5**

OKCA, evaluates and revises the curriculum regularly to ensure that it delivers an effective content with the goal of aligning with the state’s academic standards. Connections corporate office employs a curriculum department that writes curriculum for all 32 states in which there is a Connections presence. This leads to some misalignment to the state’s standards.

Once per month there are content area meetings. Teachers review the curriculum to see where the gaps are between the Connection’s curriculum and the state’s academic standards (OAS). Each content division within OKCA has an ongoing schedule for reviewing alignment processes. Teachers use the state’s Blueprints to help with the alignment process.

**COMMENDATION**

**OKCA is intentional to ensure formalized processes are in place to assist in the ongoing effort to align the adopted curriculum with the state’s academic standards (OAS).**

**FINDING 2-6**

The Oklahoma Connections Academy K–12 curriculum includes core courses in math, science, language arts/English, and social studies for every grade. Electives are also offered at every grade level. Electives include subjects such as world languages, music, game design, digital arts, and sign language. OKCA also offers Gifted and Talented, Honors, and AP courses. As part of the ongoing review of the curriculum, students and parents are asked to rate each lesson on a five-star scale. The national Connections Academy corporate office boasts having “...received an average lesson rating of 4.2 out of 5 stars”. Likewise, the OEQA performance review also solicited parents’ views regarding Connections’ curriculum (**Exhibit 2-7**).

Of the six reasons suggested of what parents like best about OKCA, Curriculum received the lowest percentage (42 percent) with flexibility earning the highest percentage (87 percent).

**Exhibit 2-7**  
**Parent Survey Open Response Question**

<b>27. What do you like best about OKCA?</b>	
Flexibility	87%
Pace	45%
Access	46%
The teachers and staff	53%
The curriculum	42%
It is a safe environment	52%

*Source: OEQA - OKCA Staff Survey Results (2017)*

Yet, included in the Parent Survey's multiple-choice section (**Exhibit 2-8**), a question related to parent satisfaction with curriculum was highly favorable. Ninety-two percent of parents *strongly agree* or *agree* that their students' needs were met with the available curriculum with five percent having *no opinion* and only three percent in *disagreement*.

**Exhibit 2-8**  
**Parent Survey Responses Related to Curriculum**

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My child's teachers provide a curriculum that meets his/her learning needs.	55%	37%	5%	3%	0%

*Source: OEQA - OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

Although an overwhelming majority of parents answered the above question favorably, the parent survey's open comments section indicated 25 percent of all comments were related to curriculum and all but two of those comments were negative. These comments were generated from two questions: What do you like least about your Virtual Charter and what is your suggestion for improvement? **Exhibit 2-9** provides a sample of those negative comments.

**Exhibit 2-9  
Survey Comments Related to the Curriculum**

<b>Parent Responses to “What do you like best about your Virtual Charter District?” and “What is your suggestion for improvement?”</b>
Core Curriculum
Curriculum
Curriculum in math is way harder than expected/than it should be in all grades.
Poor, poor math and language curriculum for 1st and 3rd grades
L.A. Curriculum, but I'm told that's the standard
The new curriculum
Curriculum contains many errors & scenarios explained as in a classroom setting that has no validity to our situation.
Significantly improve math and language curriculum. For Pete's sake
Listen to the parents about the curriculum
Update/correct curriculum, ensure qualified teachers are hired, improve lesson engagement for students (much redundancy & little out of the box thinking opportunities). Core curriculum needs complete overhaul in general for all schools.
Errors in curriculum and the way Portfolios are assigned.

*Source: OEQA - OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

In review of OKCA’s curriculum, it is clear enrolled students receive traditional materials, including textbooks, videos, and hands-on materials that complement the online learning as part of the program. When schools, whether online or brick and mortar, offer curriculum flexibility and support for each individual student then parents will be more likely to continue their child’s education within that learning environment. Curriculum pliancy is one of the appealing components OKCA offers that attracts parents to this online school.

**COMMENDATION**

**OKCA is commended for providing students with quality curriculum as well as individualized curriculum choices meeting the needs of its students for continuous success.**

**FINDING 2-7**

OKCA provides teachers with scope and sequence documents to support vertical curriculum alignment in the core areas. With the transition to OAS, the district has ensured a smoother transition by providing this essential document. **Exhibit 2-10** presents staff survey responses related to vertical alignment. Responses indicated that 89 percent of staff survey participants *strongly agree* or *agree* that the scope and sequence documents were provided for teachers.

**Exhibit 2-10  
Staff Survey Responses Regarding Curriculum Documents**

<b>Survey Questions</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>No Opinion</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
Teachers have scope and sequence documents that determine what is taught at each grade level.	67%	22%	9%	2%	0%

*Source: OEQA - OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

Vertical alignment, organizing curriculum from one grade level or content area to the next, is often challenging. Vertical alignment allows each teacher to build upon the work of the previous teacher without duplication or inconsistency of what has been taught. Proper vertical alignment requires digging into curriculum at all levels to align and layer skills, content, and background knowledge. The results of this vertical focus appear somewhat successful based on the parent survey responses. **Exhibit 2-11** illustrates that 84 percent of parents *strongly agree* or *agree* that their child is prepared for the next grade level.

**Exhibit 2-11**  
**Parent Survey Response Related to Vertical Alignment and Student Preparation**

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My child is prepared for the next grade level in the next school year.	48%	36%	14%	2%	1%

*Source: OEQA - OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

Vertical alignment articulates the logical, consistent order for teaching the standards-based content in a subject area from one grade level or course to the next. Vertical alignment is conducted as a multistep process that requires substantial time and input from district staff. In a standards-based system, vertical alignment provides a structure by which to assess achievement results. When an aligned curriculum also is aligned with performance or benchmark assessments, educators can begin to examine differences in instruction across grades and subjects within the district.<sup>11</sup>

Vertical alignment is defined as “Ensuring that curriculum objectives are specific and build one upon another, that prerequisites are mastered, gaps are eliminated, and there is an increasing sophistication and rigor in concepts, processes, and skills across the grades.”<sup>12</sup> A process for vertical alignment asks teachers to address the following issues as they pertain to reading:

- align *student expectations* across grades;
- align *assessments* across grades;
- find and fill *gaps*;
- clarify and minimize *overlaps*;
- increase *expectations* with regard to rigor and sophistication year to year;
- build upon *prerequisite skills*; and
- build *common vocabulary*.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.centerforsri.org/files/CenterIssueBriefAug09.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Curriculum and Alignment - Arizona Department of Education <https://www.azed.gov/> p.12

<sup>13</sup> Curriculum and Alignment - Arizona Department of Education <https://www.azed.gov/> p.12

**COMMENDATION**

**OKCA is commended for providing and implementing vertical curriculum alignment documents that ensure student preparation for the next grade level.**

**FINDING 2-8**

Based on interviews, OKCA does not use pacing calendars to support the delivery of the curriculum. It was noted in review of submitted documents that OKCA has created curriculum guides for most core subjects except for math in grades 1-5. These guides would be an excellent start for creating pacing calendars. Pacing calendars focus on OAS and objectives by designing a schedule for *when* to teach those standards/objectives; and *how* to teach those standards using the suggested Depth of Knowledge levels and the item specifications. Such documents are fluid, so teachers can tweak the pace throughout the year based on assessment results.

**Exhibit 2-12** reveals that 96 percent of staff survey respondents *strongly agree* or *agree* that they understand the OAS resource documents. Such resources are normally part of a pacing calendar. This allows teachers to ensure students are exposed to the content standards that will be assessed at the end of the academic year.

**Exhibit 2-12  
Staff Survey Response Related to OAS Resources**

Survey Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Teachers understand the Oklahoma Academic Standards/ objectives, test blueprints, and Item Specifications that are provided by the state department of education.	63%	33%	4%	0%	0%

*Source: OEQA - OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

Pacing Calendars provide teachers with a guide on knowing *what* OAS to teach and *when* to teach those standards for each grade level in all core content areas. Sometimes it is referred to as a curriculum map, schedule, instructional calendar, or road map. It is specific to a particular content area and level (e.g., 5th grade English Language Arts) and details when certain content standards should be taught and/or assessed during the year. While still offering teachers flexibility on how to teach, its integration with common assessments is crucial to judging student progress.

**RECOMMENDATION**

**OKCA should transition the current curriculum guides into grade level/content specific pacing calendars that reflect a schedule of when standards/objectives are to be taught while including the OAS resource components within the calendar.**

A sample pacing calendar/curriculum guide is presented in **Exhibit 2-13**. OKCA could review the OAS resource components and include these to the school’s already established curriculum guides.

**Exhibit 2-13  
Sample Pacing Calendar for Third Grade ELA**

**OAS STRANDS**  
**R**= Reading/Literature  
**RF** = Reading Foundation  
**SL**= Speaking/ Listening/

**DEPTH OF KNOWLEDGE**  
 Level **1** = Recall/Reproduction  
 Level **2** = Skills/Concepts  
 Level **3** = Strategic Thinking

**QUARTER MARKS**  
 I = Introduce T =Teach  
 T2M = Teach2Mastery  
 A = Assess

STANDARD Strand	Objective #	OAS STANDARDS & OBJECTIVES  Objectives = 10 pt. font if tested/ <i>italicized 10 pt. if not assessed on OSTP</i>	TEST BLUE PRINT		Depth of Knowledge			Quarter One Sept - Oct	Quarter Two Nov.- Jan.	Quarter Three Feb. – April 7 <sup>th</sup>
			# items	% of test	L1	L2	L3			
<b>3.2.R</b>	<b>Reading and Writing Process - Students will use a variety of recursive reading and writing processes.</b>		20	40%	x	x		I/T2M	A	
Reading and Writing Process	3.2.R.1	Students will locate the main idea and key supporting details of a text or section of text.								
	3.2.R.2	Students will compare and contrast details (e.g., plots or events, settings, and characters) to discriminate genres.								
	3.2.R.3	Students will summarize events or plots (i.e., beginning, middle, end, and conflict) of a story or text .								
<b>3.3.R</b>	<b>Critical Reading and Writing - Students will apply critical thinking skills to reading and writing.</b>		6	12%		x	x	I	T2M/A	A
Critical Reading and Writing	3.3.R.1	Students determine the author’s stated and implied purpose (i.e., entertain, inform, persuade).								
	3.3.R.2	Students will infer whether a story is narrated in first or third person point of view in grade-level literary and/or informational text.								
	3.3.R.3	Students will find textual evidence when provided with examples of literary elements and organization: ● setting (i.e., time, place) ● plot ● characters ● characterization ● theme								

*BDLC Research & Consulting (2017)*

## FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation may be implemented with existing resources.

### C. *INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY*

The educational challenges facing schools today are multifaceted and even more so in virtual school environments. Determining the most effective ways to address all the issues that impact student achievement is complex. Education research is replete in focusing on one element – *instruction*. However, that body of research does not always extend to the online environment.

*Virtual schools are rising in popularity and presence. Unfortunately, there is a relative dearth of research related to teaching and learning in virtual schools. Although there are numerous handbooks addressing teaching online, there is little research on successful online teaching in the K-12 arena. Much of the existing research focused on teaching online is rooted in face-to-face content, not focused on content areas, built upon a post-secondary audience, or fails to use data from the teachers themselves to triangulate findings.<sup>14</sup>*

Notwithstanding, research indicates that instructional delivery methodologies matter significantly. The literature clearly outlines common principles and foundational teaching practices that are necessary to improve student performance. These practices cut across all content areas and grade levels. This section will focus on instructional leadership, instructional delivery in an online environment, evaluation of the instructional delivery program, instructional technology and instruction through adopted assessments.

#### *Instructional Leadership*

School administrators must have pragmatic knowledge, skills, strategies, and tools to positively affect student achievement. They must move their instructional leadership skill set past abstract and theoretical thinking to concrete, day-to-day practices to be effective leaders. Instructional leaders understand the need for multi-faceted strategies that enable them to know when, how, and why leadership action must be taken.

Superintendents and principals form the core of educational leadership in school districts whether those schools are of brick and mortar or within a virtual environment. Over the past two decades, the role of the school leader has changed and so has the expectations and training of new administrators. Today, the educational leader is responsible for consistency of implementation of an aligned curriculum, the quality of instruction, and student performance. Recent research contends that school leaders influence classroom teaching, and consequently student learning, by staffing schools with highly effective teachers and supporting those teachers with effective teaching and learning environments.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Best practices in teaching K-12 online: Lessons learned from Michigan Virtual School teachers  
<http://www.ncolr.org/jiol/issues/pdf/7.1.2.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> [http://cepa.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/Kappan\\_leadership.pdf](http://cepa.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/Kappan_leadership.pdf).

The College of Education at Washington University, Center for Educational Leadership (CEL), has developed a framework for effective instructional leadership. According to their website, the framework is not the sum of the work of instructional leaders. It is a description of the most important aspects of instructional leadership. **Exhibit 2-14a** describes the five core beliefs that drive the work in school leadership at the Center for Educational Leadership, and **Exhibit 2-14b** describes the four dimensions of instructional leadership.

**Exhibit 2-14a**  
**Core Beliefs – Center for Educational Leadership**

Beliefs	
Instructional leadership is learning-focused, learning for both students and adults, and learning which is measured by improvement in instruction and in the quality of student learning.	
Instructional leadership must reside with a team of leaders of which the principal serves as the “leader of leaders.”	
A culture of public practice and reflective practice is essential for effective instructional leadership and the improvement of instructional practice.	
Instructional leadership addresses the cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic, and learning diversity in the school community.	
Instructional leadership focuses upon the effective management of resources and of people – recruiting, hiring, developing, evaluating – particularly in changing environments.	

*Source: 4 Dimensions of Instructional Leadership*<sup>16</sup>

**Exhibit 2-14b**  
**Dimensions of Instructional Leadership**

Dimensions	
Vision, Mission, and Culture Building	School leaders, committed to collective leadership, create a reflective, equity-driven, achievement-based culture of learning focused upon academic success for every student.
Improvement of Instructional Practice	Based upon a shared vision of effective teaching and learning, school leaders establish a focus on learning; nurture a culture of continuous improvement, innovation, and public practice; and monitor, evaluate and develop teacher performance to improve instruction.
Allocation of Resources	School leaders allocate resources strategically so that instructional practice and student learning continue to improve.
Management of People and Processes	School leaders engage in strategic personnel management and develop working environments in which teachers have full access to supports that help improve instruction.

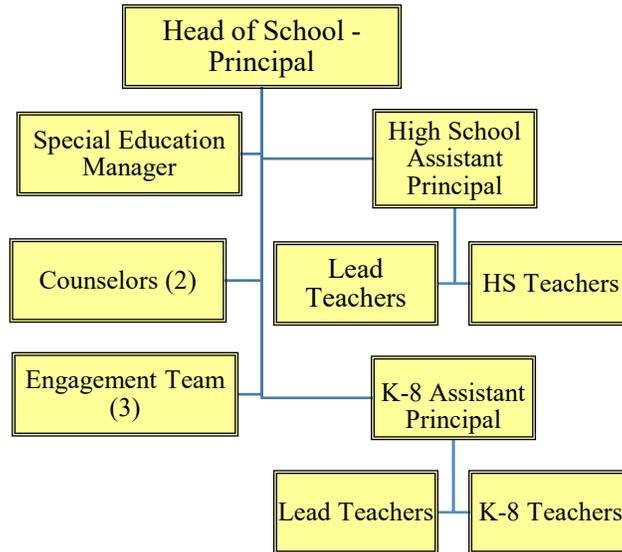
*Source: 4 Dimensions of Instructional Leadership*<sup>17</sup>

**Exhibit 2-15** provides the onsite visit snapshot of OKCA’s organizational chart as it relates to the leadership for instructional delivery. The first tier includes the Head of School, Deputy Head of School, and other central office administrators that are directly connected to instructional delivery. The second tier comprises the mid-management team such as the schools’ principals, while the third tier consists of lead teachers/department chairs, and teachers.

<sup>16</sup> <http://info.k-12leadership.org/4-dimensions-of-instructional-leadership>

<sup>17</sup> <http://info.k-12leadership.org/4-dimensions-of-instructional-leadership>

**Exhibit 2-15**  
**OKCA Instructional Leadership Organizational Chart**



OEQA (2017)

**FINDING 2-9**

OKCA’s instructional delivery system is supported by three levels of leadership that are directly responsible for student outcomes. Survey results as well as interviews and focus group comments indicate a high satisfaction with the instructional leadership at OKCA.

**Exhibit 2-16** provides staff survey results related to the perception of the district administration and principals as instructional leaders. Ninety-six percent of survey respondents *strongly agree* or *agree* that district administration provides a continuous instructional improvement process. Also, 95 percent of survey participants *strongly agree* or *agree* that their principal was an effective instructional leader with four percent having *no opinion*. Staff also believes that their “leaders hold themselves accountable for student learning” with 98 percent who *strongly agree* or *agree*.

**Exhibit 2-16**  
**Staff Survey Results Related to Instructional Leadership**

Staff Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Our virtual charter academy has a continuous improvement process based on data, goals, actions, and measures for growth.	83%	13%	4%	0%	0%
My Principal is an effective instructional leader	73%	22%	4%	0%	0%
Our virtual charter academy leaders hold themselves accountable for student learning.	83%	15%	2%	0%	0%

*Source: OEQA- OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

### COMMENDATION

**OKCA is commended for providing effective instructional leaders to guide the district's ongoing commitment toward student success and school improvement.**

#### *Instructional Delivery in an Online Environment*

The effectiveness of instructional delivery whether it is in a face-to-face forum or in a virtual setting is considered as having the most impact on a student's success in content mastery. Tucker and Strange (2005) linked the evaluation of teacher effectiveness with student achievement. It is now known, empirically, that effective teachers have a direct influence in enhancing student learning. Years of research on teacher quality support the fact that effective teachers not only make students feel good about school and learning (regardless of setting), but also that their work actually results in increased student achievement. Studies have substantiated that a whole range of personal and professional qualities are associated with higher levels of student achievement. For example, such skills are verbal ability, content knowledge; pedagogical knowledge, ability to use a range of teaching strategies skillfully, and enthusiasm for the subject characterize more successful teachers.<sup>18</sup>

How does this research translate to virtual instructional practices? K-12 virtual schooling is still developing as a field of research, policy, and practice. One specific area with limited research is a deep understanding of promising instructional practices used by K-12 virtual school teachers. An understanding of the instructional practices of K-12 virtual school teachers is vital to the field of online education. It is a critical need because teaching in K-12 virtual, online schools requires skills that are unique from those used in face-to-face settings. OEQA consultants reviewed the available research literature to explore some instructional practices that have shown to be promising for K-12 online instruction and/or blended instruction. **Exhibit 2-17** provides a synthesis of the research related to promising practices found to be critical for successful online learning programs.

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/104136/chapters/The-Power-of-an-Effective-Teacher-and-Why-We-Should-Assess-It.aspx>

**Exhibit 2-17**  
**A Synthesis of Promising Instructional Practices for Online Learning**

Practice	Description of Practice	Supporting References
<b>Connecting with Students</b> -through effective communication	Commitment participants made to establishing relationships with students because of their perceived impact on student motivation and success.	DiPietro (2010);
<b>Fluid practice</b> - moving from their self-perception as a “knowledge giver” to one of a “knowledge guide”	The transition experienced by participants to facilitate the translation of their prior practices to better suit the necessities of teaching in the virtual course setting.	DiPietro;
<b>Engaging Students with Content</b> Getting students excited about content; Integrating technology to motivate students; Motivate students to interact with content; Motivating students through the structure of content; Using technology to facilitate learning; Using technology to illustrate content	The use of strategies to satisfy specific goals for making content accessible and integrating technology represent enactments of the belief virtual school teachers have about engaging students with the content.	DiPietro; Pazzaglia, Clements, Lavigne, Stafford, (2016)
<b>Supporting Student Success</b> – Meeting student needs; structuring content to scaffold learning; utilize support structures	Communicating with students to address needs; Encouraging and helping students establish a routine; Giving feedback; Helping students achieve their goals; Using directive communication; Adapting course to accommodate pacing; Creating an organized environments;	DiPietro; Hanover Research, 2009
<b>Implementing Instruction based on Data</b> - this instructional strategy engages teachers in regularly analyzing quantifiable data from student assessments and other metrics. Based on their analyses, teachers modify instruction with the goal of improving student academic achievement.	Instruction based on data is made easier within the virtual environment due to the automated student information system that includes not only state test results but also benchmarking and formative common assessments.	Paul Bambrick-Santoyo’s Driven by Data: A Practical Guide to Improve Instruction
<b>Use of multiple strategies for assessing student learning</b> –	Assessment strategies should involve consideration of student learning styles; this also includes allowing students the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge in ways that are personally meaningful.	DiPietro, Ferdig, Black, & Preston (2008)
<b>Form collaborative relationship with parents of students</b> - researchers have stressed the importance of schools creating policies that help parents to better understand and respond to student needs	“Parents and instructors are more likely to effectively and efficiently collaborate once a sense of closeness has been formed and parents and instructors have established a degree of social presence” (p. 21). As a result, online programs should use more varied and continuous strategies to ensure parental engagement.	Borup et al. (2014)

*Source: OEQA Adaptation of DiPietro, et al., Synthesis of Promising Instructional Practices for Online Learning (2016)<sup>19</sup>*

**FINDING 2-10**

OKCA staff and parent survey responses reflect satisfaction with teachers’ instructional delivery competencies in a synchronous and asynchronous environment. Instructional delivery practices

<sup>19</sup> Journal of Interactive Online Learning [www.ncolr.org/jiol](http://www.ncolr.org/jiol)

that were found to be promising or best practices for online learning (see Exhibit 2-19) seemed to also be commonly used by OKCA staff. **Exhibit 2-18a** displays staff responses and **Exhibit 2-18b** provides parent responses related to successful instructional delivery practices that are used by OKCA staff. In all three staff survey questions, an average 95 percent of staff *strongly agrees* or *agrees* that their instructional delivery strategies met student needs, encouraged critical thinking, and provided timely feedback. Likewise, 89 percent of parents *strongly agree* or *agree* that teachers employed successful instructional delivery strategies including feedback to students and parents.

**Exhibit 2-18a**  
**OKCA Staff Responses Related to Instructional Delivery**

Staff Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Teachers develop and implement instructional strategies and interventions to address individual learning needs of students.	67%	30%	2%	0%	0%
Teachers consistently use instructional strategies that require self-reflection and development of critical thinking skills.	63%	33%	4%	0%	0%
Teachers provide students with specific and timely feedback about their learning.	61%	30%	7%	2%	0%

*Source: OEQA- OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

**Exhibit 2-18b**  
**OKCA Parent Responses Related to Instructional Delivery**

Parent Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My child's teachers use a variety of teaching strategies and learning activities.	53%	37%	8%	1%	>1%
My child's teachers meet his/her learning needs by individualizing instruction.	49%	35%	12%	4%	>1%
My child's teachers help me to understand my child's progress.	53%	35%	9%	3%	0%
My child's teachers keep me informed regularly of my child's academic progress.	53%	33%	11%	3%	>1%
My child knows the expectations for learning in all subjects.	57%	36%	6%	2%	0%
My child's teachers report on my child's progress in easy to understand language.	58%	34%	7%	1%	>1%

*Source: OEQA- OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

**COMMENDATION**

**OKCA staff is commended for employing promising instructional delivery strategies in an online learning environment.**

**FINDING 2-11**

The online instructional delivery by OKCA teaching staff is conducted in either a synchronous or asynchronous environment. The staff reported using a synchronous approach the most in order to ensure student engagement and interaction. **Exhibit 2-19a** provides staff survey responses and **Exhibit 2-19b** provides student responses regarding their experiences in instructional delivery platforms and formats. Ninety-six percent of staff reported using the synchronous format *some* or *very much*. Synchronous format was used more than the other two approaches with 86 percent of survey respondents using asynchronous and 18% using face-to-face delivery.

**Exhibit 2-19a  
Staff Survey Responses Related to Online Learning Formats**

<b>Which (if not all) e-learning formats do you use and to what degree do you use them?</b>				
<b>Format</b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>Very little</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>Very much</b>
<b>Face-to-Face</b>	37%	45%	18%	0%
<b>Synchronous</b> (specific time each school day)	4%	0%	30%	66%
<b>Asynchronous</b> (anytime/any day)	8%	6%	34%	52%

*Source: OEQA- OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

**Exhibit 2-20b** indicate that student survey respondents reported their teachers use synchronous format the most (79 percent) with 70 percent reporting that asynchronous was used *some* or *very much*. Only 37 percent of student respondents reported that their teachers used face-to-face format. According to OKCA administration, there is no instructional delivery that is face-to-face; however, there are events and outings that occur throughout the year that they may be confusing when referring to face-to-face instructional delivery.

**Exhibit 2-19b  
Student Survey Responses Related to Online Learning Formats**

<b>Which e-learning formats do most of your teacher(s) use and to what degree does he/she use them for instruction?</b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>Very Little</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>Very Much</b>
Face-to-Face	39%	25%	30%	7%
Synchronous (at a specific time each day)	8%	14%	41%	38%
Asynchronous (anytime during the day)	7%	23%	47%	23%

*Source: OEQA- OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

**COMMENDATION**

**OKCA teaching staff is commended for their efforts to increase student engagement and interaction using the synchronous e-learning format for instructional delivery.**

**FINDING 2-12**

The OKCA instructional delivery model is for teachers to be facilitators of the learning, clarifying problematic areas and working with the learning coaches and their students. However, with many teachers serving a large number of students, survey results reveal some students feel they are not receiving the attention needed. For the 2017-18 school year there are approximately 40 teachers with three of those being adjunct serving 1,496 enrolled students. This would indicate an average of 37.4 students per teacher.

For comparative purposes, OEQA selected five traditional brick and mortar Oklahoma school districts as peer districts for OKCA based upon size, percentage of economically disadvantaged students and teacher/student ratio. Since there are no virtual peers for OKCA at this time that are of similar size, these five districts were formed based on OEQA methodology. OKCA and its five peers are part of the **Community Group E1**.<sup>20</sup> Peers include, Bethel, Chandler, Inola, Marlow, and Sequoyah. **Exhibit 2-20** provides a look at OKCA's teacher/student ratio as compared with the five peers and the state's average. The data is from the 2015-2016 school year (the latest information by OEQA). OKCA has the highest teacher/student ratio of 1:37. All, but one peer has a ratio of 1:18.

**Exhibit 2-20**  
**OKCA, Peer Districts, and the State's Average of Teacher/Student Ratios**  
**End of School Year 2015-16**

<b>Entity</b>	<b>Enrollment</b>	<b>Economically Disadvantaged</b>	<b>Number of Non-Special Ed Teachers</b>	<b>Average Teacher/ Student Ratio</b>
<b>OKCA</b>	<b>1,344</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>1:37</b>
Bethel	1,354	52%	75	1:18
Chandler	1,212	49%	68	1:18
Inola	1,362	51%	73	1:19
Marlow	1,433	48%	80	1:18
Sequoyah	1,352	43%	77	1:18

*OEQA 2016 School District Profiles (2017)*

The OKCA teacher-to-student ratio is twice the size of its peers. This situation may be adversely affecting the math scores at all levels as indicated on the Student Performance section of this report. OKCA students at all assessed grade levels (3-9) consistently and significantly performed lower in math as compared to its peers and the state's average. Yet in reading/ELA OKCA students outperformed one or more peers for five of the seven grade levels assessed. This indicates a need to consider adding math teachers or an additional math specialist at the elementary and middle school level.

<sup>20</sup> Community Group E1 = 1,000-1,999 students enrolled with less than 62 percent of students eligible to participate in the federally funded Free and Reduced Payment Lunch Program. <https://www.ok.gov/oeqa/documents/excerpt2015.pdf>

Although the virtual school has twice as many students per teacher as compared to the peers, OKCA has the advantage of learning coaches (parents/guardians of students) to support the facilitation of learning. Yet, at the secondary level this advantage decreases as learning coaches become less involved with the older students.

The student survey results indicate a strong desire for more interactions with teachers and other students with increased opportunities for student engagement. **Exhibit 2-21** provides a sample of student comments related to this issue of more student/teacher interaction and student engagement. (As a side note there were many positive comments related to OKCA.)

**Exhibit 2-21**  
**Sample of Student Comments Related to Student-Teacher Interaction Engagement**

Sampling of Student Comments Related to Student/Teacher Interactions & Engagement
Some of the Teachers ... are slow to grade my work
i think ther should be more face chats and live lessons
Very little instruction on confusing assignments
Some teachers dont update your grade off of assignments for sometimes maybe a week or 2
For me, without a teacher always telling me what to do, it can be really stressful
there not enough time to go to talk with teachers
More one on one time with the teacher.
better communication
The teachers to answer or get back to you ASAP
It would be nice if they updated the looks and the response of the website. It would be better to if they could be more attentive in the live lessons because they usaully answer the same person over and over. And for the live lesson room and discussion the format is slow and seems outdated for this time, so it would be nice for a nicer and clean format that has a nice response time.
more interaction
Have more of the teachers reach out to students. Some of my teachers have not contacted me at all unless I contact them first. And a couple of them don't answer webmails unless a week+ later.
Some of the teachers are pretty hard to deal with, such as taking weeks to reply to a webmail or to a call. Or not being as descriptive as they should be over a large assignment

*Source: OEQA- OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

Although OKCA teaching staff understands the importance of engaging students and the desire to increase student engagement through the use of synchronous e-learning format, research indicates that student achievement outcomes increase when there are elements of the blended learning model included in the e-learning environment. Blended learning has been defined by Innosight Institute as “a formal education program in which a student learns at least in part through online delivery of content and instruction with some element of student control over time, place, path or pace.”<sup>21</sup> This can be accomplished with strengthening the two major e-learning formats utilized by OKCA.

It should be noted the current Oklahoma Administrative Code (OAC) limits the time virtual charter school teachers can have face-to-face interaction with their students. OAC 777:10-5-3 states, “... No statewide virtual charter school or employee of the statewide virtual charter school

<sup>21</sup> [http://www.innosightinstitute.org/innosight/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Classifying-K-12-blended-learning2.pdf?utm\\_campaign=elearningindustry.com&utm\\_source=%2Fwhy-blended-learning-is-better&utm\\_medium=link](http://www.innosightinstitute.org/innosight/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Classifying-K-12-blended-learning2.pdf?utm_campaign=elearningindustry.com&utm_source=%2Fwhy-blended-learning-is-better&utm_medium=link)

shall provide face-to-face instruction to any charter school student unless...The instruction is limited to no more than nine (9) hours per week of instruction per student.” With this restriction, it is best to strengthen the online learning formats. With OKCA’s model of using only synchronous format for instructional delivery, successful components of a face-to-face delivery should be simulated.

The U.S. Department of Education conducted a systematic search of the research literature from 1996 through July 2008 and identified more than a thousand empirical studies of online learning. Of those studies, a meta-analysis of 50 study effects, found that,

Instruction *combining online and face-to-face elements* had a larger advantage relative to purely face-to-face instruction than did purely online instruction. The mean effect size in studies comparing blended with face-to-face instruction was +0.35,  $p < .001$ . This effect size is larger than that for studies comparing purely online and purely face-to-face conditions, which had an average effect size of +0.05,  $p = .46$ . In fact, the learning outcomes for students in purely online conditions and those for students in purely face-to-face conditions were statistically equivalent. An important issue to keep in mind in reviewing these findings is that many studies did not attempt to equate (a) all the curriculum materials, (b) aspects of pedagogy and (c) learning time in the treatment and control conditions. Indeed, some authors asserted that it would be impossible to have done so. Hence, the observed advantage for blended learning conditions is not necessarily rooted in the media used per se and may reflect differences in content, pedagogy and learning time.<sup>22</sup>

## RECOMMENDATION

**OKCA should first study the issue of increasing the number of teachers, if financially feasible; secondly, include more engaging instructional *strategies* that would increase student/teacher interactions to improve academic achievement outcomes in the synchronous environment.**

In **Exhibit 2-22** a comparative matrix is presented, via the Ontario Ministry of Education<sup>23</sup>, which demonstrates elements found in blended learning formats. Blended learning has the most to offer students in terms of communication between teacher and students, collaboration, and demonstration of learning.

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<sup>22</sup> This report is available on the Department’s Web site at [www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oepd/ppss/reports.html](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oepd/ppss/reports.html).

<sup>23</sup> Defining blended learning – Ontario Ministry of Education <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/elearning/blend.html>

**Exhibit 2-22  
Comparing Blended Learning Elements to Other Forms of Learning**

<b>STRATEGIES, TOOLS AND RESOURCES</b>			
<b>Goal</b>	<b>Classroom Learning</b>	<b>Blended Learning</b>	<b>E-Learning</b>
Communication between teacher and students	Full group lessons Small group lessons or tutorials Individual conferences Marked assignments and rubrics	Full group lessons Small group lessons or tutorials Individual conferences Marked assignments and rubrics Digital course materials Online discussions E-mail Instant messages News announcements Online calendar Dropboxes Online grade tool Rubrics	Online discussions E-mail* Instant messages News announcements Online calendar Dropboxes Googledocs/drive* Online grade tool* Rubrics* Web conferences Small group lessons/tutorials Digital course materials*
Collaboration among students	Learning centers or other room arrangements Class discussions Face-to-face group work	Learning centers or other room arrangements Class discussions Face-to-face group work Online group work Online discussions E-mail Instant messages Blogs Electronic portfolios	Online group work Online discussions Chat sessions E-mail Instant messages Blogs Electronic portfolios Web conferences
Demonstration of learning	Paper-and-pencil tests and assignments submitted in person Live presentations, labs, performances, or exhibits of skill Models, works of art, posters, and other physical artifacts submitted in person	Paper-and-pencil tests and assignments submitted in person Live presentations, labs, performances, or exhibits of skill Models, works of art, posters, and other physical artifacts submitted in person Blogs Electronic portfolios Online discussions Online surveys and quizzes Assignments, such as essays, worksheets, slide shows, photographs, and videos submitted to electronic dropboxes	Blogs Electronic portfolios Online discussions Online surveys and quizzes Assignments, such as essays, worksheets, slide shows, photographs, and videos submitted to electronic dropboxes Web conferences

\*Unique to OKCA                      E-Learning Industry<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> <https://elearningindustry.com/why-blended-learning-is-better>

OKCA should review the student survey results (OEQA, 2017) to determine what activities/strategies engage the students that *may not* be currently present in the instructional delivery system of OKCA. With that same intent, also review activities/strategies which *are* present and occurring that the students found interactive as well as engaging and ensure these successful strategies are communicated to all staff. Enhancing the online synchronous format to include elements that exist in a blended learning environment (face-to-face elements) could certainly motivate students to attend their online synchronous courses.

A study (Delialiolu, 2012) was conducted to investigate how blending of different instructional approaches with technology affects students' engagement. A computer networks course was designed and implemented for the first eight weeks of the semester as a lecture-based blended learning environment and for the second eight weeks of the semester as a problem-based blended learning environment. A single group repeated measures research design was carried out to understand if there were significant differences in measures of student engagement between these two blended learning approaches. Repeated analysis on the data collected from 89 students revealed that Active Learning and Total Time on Task indicators of student engagement were significantly higher in the problem-based part of the course.<sup>25</sup>

Many elements found in the blended learning model found in Exhibit 2-22 above, exists to some degree within the OKCA instructional delivery model, but, as per survey comments, may not be specifically implemented with fidelity by all teaching staff. The elements found in the blended learning environments ensure student engagement, teacher/student interactions, and student motivation is strengthened. Video, audio and visually enhanced presentations are included in a blended learning course design to help keep learners engaged and, also, to make sure that all material is easily understood – something that is not always the case in the fast-paced environment of a physical classroom.<sup>26</sup> During teacher evaluations, student engagement should be a top priority.

An option that OKCA may want to consider is piloting online elements of an Enriched-Virtual Model of blended learning. This model is a whole-school experience in which within each course (e.g., math), students divide their time between attending a brick-and-mortar campus (minimal) and learning remotely using online delivery of content and instruction (majority of time). Many Enriched-Virtual programs began as full-time online schools and then developed blended programs to provide students with brick-and-mortar school experiences. A pilot for this model could be adapted to meet the mission and focus of OKCA. The pilot may only involve one course that may be most challenging for secondary students such as algebra I or biology. The 'brick-and-mortar' campus may even occur online in a Skype context where students would use their computer cameras to have that feel of being in the presence of their teacher and peers. Based on students' concerns, this may help create a more connected learning environment where students feel that they are part of a learning cohort.

## FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation may be implemented with existing resources.

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<sup>25</sup> O. Delialiolu, (2012). Student engagement in blended learning environments with lecture-based and problem-based instructional approaches. *Educational Technology & Society*, v15 n3 p310-322. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ992563>

<sup>26</sup> using different and more interactive material (like presentations that are not just pages filled with bullet-points)

### ***Evaluation of the Instructional Delivery Program***

The instructional delivery program typically includes three cyclic stages, which involve planning, implementation, and evaluation. Most schools when enacting the third stage use only the measurement of student performance outcomes on mandated assessments. However, when conducting an evaluation of the instructional delivery program there should be a consideration of multiple measurements that are specific to all aspects of the program (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004). Measurements should focus on key indicators within the program such as:

- Its purpose: what the program is intended to achieve.
- Its inputs: the resources invested and activities carried out to achieve the goals.
- Its logic: the way the program is expected to achieve its goals.
- Its outputs: the program's activities/products, participants, and organization models.
- Its outcomes: the program's short-, intermediate-, and long-term impacts.
- The external factors that affect the program's ability to achieve its goals.<sup>27</sup>

For purposes of this performance review of OKCA's instructional delivery program, Blitz and Schulman's (2016) logic model is used to examine the schools' inputs, outputs, and outcomes of the instructional delivery program. The examination begins with this guided question, "Do these elements align to the school's central purposes for an online learning program?" The two elements observed (outputs and outcomes) are presented and defined below:

- **OKCA Outputs** – the specific emphasis the school places on certain activities to promote strong student outcomes such as collaborative opportunities for students
- **Outcomes** – the short-, intermediate-, and long-term impacts of OKCA's instructional delivery program that are measured through attitudes and beliefs, behaviors/practices, or performance indicators.

For purposes of evaluating OKCA's instructional delivery program, an excerpt from the student survey was organized as a potential evaluation tool for measuring the outputs and outcomes. This survey tool presents a few of OKCA activities as *outputs*, and students' perspectives on how well OKCA instructional delivery program has contributed to their development as *outcomes*.

### **FINDING 2-13**

When examining the student survey results as a measurement tool for evaluating OKCA's instructional delivery program, the focus was centered on OKCA's outputs (Exhibit 2-23a) and student outcomes as related to college and career readiness (Exhibit 2-23b). **Exhibit 2-23a** presents students perspective on what OKCA emphasizes the most within the instructional program. Ninety percent of the students thought the school emphasized *spending time preparing for standardized tests* the most. The school's lowest output emphasis as perceived by the students (64 percent) was *participating in school events and activities*.

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<sup>27</sup> Retrieved from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?projectID=444>

**Exhibit 2-23a**  
**Sample for a OKCA Program Evaluation Measurement Tool**

OKCA OUTPUTS					
How much does your school emphasize each of the following?	Not at all	Very Little	Some	Very Much	Total Emphasis
Spending time preparing for standardized tests	1%	9%	43%	47%	90%
Participating in school events and activities (athletics, plays, academic competitions)	15%	21%	43%	21%	64%
Using technology tools (e.g., Google apps for education, virtual field trips, etc.) for class work.	7%	15%	48%	30%	78%
Furthering education or training beyond high school	6%	14%	45%	35%	80%

*Source: OEQA- OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

**Exhibit 2-23b** solicits students' perception of how much their experience at OKCA has contributed to their development. Using technology to gather and communicate information and developing career goals were two areas receiving the highest percentage of student responses (tied 87 percent). The area students felt contributed least (64 percent) to their development was working well with others to complete a task or project.

**Exhibit 2-23b**  
**Sample for a OKCA Program Evaluation Measurement Tool**

STUDENT OUTCOMES					
How much has your experience at this school contributed to your development in the following areas?	Not at all	Very Little	Some	Very Much	Total of school experiences contributing to student development
Acquiring skills for a job after completing high school.	7%	16%	44%	32%	76%
Writing effectively	2%	11%	45%	41%	86%
Thinking critically (reasoning, asking "Why")	4%	12%	43%	42%	85%
Developing creative ideas and solutions	4%	12%	42%	42%	84%
Reading and understanding challenging materials	4%	10%	42%	45%	87%
Using technology to gather and communicate information.	3%	10%	41%	46%	87%
Developing career goals	6%	14%	46%	34%	80%
Working well with others to complete a task or project.	15%	23%	41%	21%	62%

*Source: OEQA- OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

**COMMENDATION**

**OKCA is commended for an instructional delivery program that a majority of student survey participants perceive as contributing to their development on eight college/career outcomes.**

Although the sample measurement tool devised for the purposes of this review is simple and limited in providing a good picture of OKCA's outputs, it does provide a working model that can and should be built upon for future program evaluation. It is recommended that OKCA build upon this evaluation approach for determining the effectiveness of their instructional program delivery by creating a parent and staff instrument with the intentional purpose of program evaluation.

***Instructional Technology***

Technology is a tool that can change the nature of learning. Integrating technology into instruction means more than teaching basic computer skills and software programs in a separate computer class. Effective technology integration must happen across the curriculum in ways that research shows deepen and enhance the learning process. In particular, it must support four key components of learning: active engagement, participation in groups, frequent interaction and feedback, and connection to real-world experts.

Technology can change the way teachers teach, offering online educators effective ways to reach different types of learners and assess student understanding through multiple means. It also enhances the relationship between teacher and student. When technology is effectively integrated into subject areas, teachers grow into roles of adviser, content expert, and coach. Effective technology integration is achieved when the use of technology is routine and transparent and when technology supports curricular goals.

**FINDING 2-14**

As per the student survey, a majority of OKCA students expressed interest for using technology tools such as personal devices and apps for completing assignments and engagement in class work. OKCA has met that interest by emphasizing the use of technology tools in class work. More importantly, students feel that OKCA has contributed to their development in the use of technology.

**Exhibit 2-24** provides information about OKCA students' interest in using various technology tools in completing assignments or the use of those tools during the instructional delivery process. Students' interest in using technology tools in assignments was higher with an average of 71 percent having *some* or *very much* interest compared to 29 percent having *very little* or *no* interest. Also, 78 percent of students responded that their school emphasizes the use of technology tools for class work. Students acknowledged with a greater percentage (87 percent) that OKCA has contributed to their development in using technology to gather and communicate information.

**Exhibit 2-24**  
**Student Survey Responses Related to Interests in Use of Technology Tools**

<b>How much do each of the following activities and assignments interest or engage you?</b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>Very Little</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>Very Much</b>	<b>Total Emphasis</b>
Teacher lectures (through video or other technological means)	8%	18%	52%	22%	72%
Discussions and debates (online interactive formats such as google hangouts)	7%	20%	45%	29%	74%
Projects and lessons involving personal device apps or other technology sources.	11%	24%	43%	23%	66%
<b>How much does your school emphasize each of the following?</b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>Very Little</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>Very Much</b>	<b>Total Emphasis</b>
Using technology tools (e.g., Google apps for education, virtual field trips, etc.) for class work.	7%	15%	48%	30%	78%
<b>How much has your experience at this school contributed to your development in the following areas?</b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>Very Little</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>Very Much</b>	<b>Total Emphasis</b>
Using technology to gather and communicate information.	3%	10%	41%	46%	87%

*Source: OEQA- OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

## COMMENDATION

**OKCA is meeting individual student interests by emphasizing and integrating the use of technology tools into the instructional delivery process.**

**FINDING 2-15**

OKCA is successful in the employment of technology tools in the delivery of instruction as it matches individual student needs and interests. However, there appears to be less focus on the use of technology for promoting a community of learners through online collaborative interactions/projects. Yet, encouraging students to reach out to each other to solve problems and share knowledge not only builds collaboration skills, it leads to deeper learning and understanding as well as preparing them to be college ready and career successful.

**Exhibit 2-25** presents student survey results related to students' interests in collaborative activities. As shown in the answer to the first question, there does not seem to be a high interest (50 percent) in group project assignments. In the second question, 62% of the student survey participants agreed that the school had contributed *some* or *very much* to their development in working with others to complete a task or project, yet 38 percent of students felt the school had contributed either *not at all* or *very little*. **Exhibit 2-25**

**Survey Results as Related to Student Interests in Collaborative Activities**

How much do each of the following activities and assignments interest or engage you?	Not at all	Very Little	Some	Very Much
Group projects through online technology.	19%	31%	33%	17%
How much has your experience at this school contributed to your development in the following areas?	Not at all	Very Little	Some	Very Much
Working well with others to complete a task or project.	15%	23%	41%	21%

*Source: OEQA- OKCA Survey Results (2016)*

In an effort to discover best-practices or promising practices for K-12 online teachers, a study (DiPietro, et al., 2008)<sup>28</sup> found, through triangulation of several data sources, multiple pedagogical strategies to improve student engagement. Among these strategies several pedagogical themes emerged related to the application of technology tools to enhance collaborative opportunities among the students. **Exhibit 2-26** provides a few of those themes as each is detailed according to a promising practice, description of that practice, and an exemplar (online teacher testimony) of that practice.

<sup>28</sup> Journal of Interactive Online Learning www.ncolr.org/jiol Volume 7, Number 1, Spring 2008

**Exhibit 2-26**  
**Practices for Using Technology to Enhance Collaborative Opportunities for Students**

Practice	Description	Exemplar
Teachers were skilled in the basic use of technology.	Having skill with the basic uses of technology benefits instruction by knowing what tools are available in the course environment and their potential for supporting student learning.	“A virtual teacher must have knowledge of technology. Just to operate the management system for the course delivery requires training and practice.”
Teachers are interested in and enjoy exploring new technologies that have potential value for virtual school environments. Teachers continually extend their content and technological knowledge.	This practice indicates an interest in exploring the potential for using a variety of web-based technologies with the virtual school courses they teach. Teachers value being introduced to new strategies for teaching content and how that can meet the needs of diverse students enrolled in the course.	“Successful virtual school teachers must continually improve and continually educate themselves on the curriculum and the technology to provide the best opportunities for students.”
Teachers use multiple strategies to form relationships that support rich interactions with students.	This practice represents a synthesis of statements made by participants that address the need to form strong relationships students enrolled in their virtual school course. Establishing and nurturing these relationships with students was discussed in terms of the impact it has on the quality of interaction in the course, as well as the formation of community.	“...each semester there is a collaborative learning unit - even though we’re going through a Flex course, they work in collaborative groups. I try to organize these groups based on ... ability level, gender, where the kids are from, and then ...each takes on a role. They have to discuss from their perspective, whether this should be done or not, and ...come to a group decision. Then they create PowerPoint presentations individually and then they get to see each other’s presentations and have to comment about the way people have presented their information...”
Teachers encourage and support communication between students.	This practice represents the value of encouraging student-student communication in a course. The value of encouraging these relationships was discussed in terms of the social climate that forms as a result and the opportunities offered by establishing a community of learners.	“Kids are going back, some of them are posting three, four times to a thread because they get engaged in the conversation, the material is interesting. But they talk about other things too like, football. Whatever it is about using the boards, it has the ability to make it (the content) very interesting for them.”

*Source: Best Practices in Teaching K-12 Online<sup>29</sup>*

## RECOMMENDATION

**OKCA faculty should increase facilitating collaborative project opportunities using technology innovation to enhance student-to-student interactions while developing college and career readiness skills.**

When considering best practices for K-12 online education, practitioners need to adhere to some principles to guide their work. For example, virtual K-12 educators need to be able to modify the instructional practices and pedagogical techniques used in face-to-face settings for the online

<sup>29</sup> Journal of Interactive Online Learning [www.ncolr.org/jiol](http://www.ncolr.org/jiol) Volume 7, Number 1, Spring 2008

environment. This may involve online educators to develop skills to nurture interaction and communication with and among students during the online learning experience. This requires the utilization of pedagogical techniques that draw on and integrate the available technological tools to support student collaboration and knowledge acquisition (Ferdig, Cavanaugh, DiPietro, Black, and Dawson, 2009).<sup>30</sup>

Based on the feedback from the student surveys it would serve OKCA well to investigate further into ensuring that students are provided the same opportunities to collaborate on projects with other students online as they would have in a brick and mortar institution. This would not be limited to only face-time (Google Hangouts, Skype, BBC, Second Life (avatars) etc.) interactions, but in collaborative group projects. To ensure that students remain motivated and focused in their learning and gain the most from their interaction with other students and their instructors, appropriate strategies for learning activities need to be formulated and implemented.<sup>31</sup> Technological tools make it possible for students to collaborate with their instructors and peers for learning new skills and acquiring enhanced knowledge. Some examples are Proofhub,<sup>32</sup> Mindmeister,<sup>33</sup> Slidrocket,<sup>34</sup> Big Marker,<sup>35</sup> and Second Life.<sup>36</sup>

## FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

## FINDING 2-16

OKCA is a virtual charter public school that operates mostly from state and federal funding to offer all students a free education. A students' only access to OKCA's online instruction requires the use of a computer or other appropriate device (e.g. iPad). Students without computers cannot enroll at OKCA since this is the only means students have to access direct instruction, which is delivered synchronously or asynchronously by their assigned teacher(s). Also, most all curriculum is only accessible using a computer.

OKCA's website and student handbook state the current *Computer Policy* as:

### *10.2.4 Use of Personal Equipment and Software*

*Oklahoma Connections Academy families will be expected to provide their own computers and internet access. Families should review the Technology section of the School Handbook: General Portion or school website to ensure their equipment meets the minimum system specifications.*

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<sup>30</sup> <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ880563>

<sup>31</sup> <https://elearningindustry.com/6-online-collaboration-tools-and-strategies-boosting-learning>

<sup>32</sup> [https://www.proofhub.com/?utm\\_campaign=elearningindustry.com&utm\\_source=%2F6-online-collaboration-tools-and-strategies-boosting-learning&utm\\_medium=link](https://www.proofhub.com/?utm_campaign=elearningindustry.com&utm_source=%2F6-online-collaboration-tools-and-strategies-boosting-learning&utm_medium=link)

<sup>33</sup> [https://www.mindmeister.com/?utm\\_campaign=elearningindustry.com&utm\\_source=%2F6-online-collaboration-tools-and-strategies-boosting-learning&utm\\_medium=link](https://www.mindmeister.com/?utm_campaign=elearningindustry.com&utm_source=%2F6-online-collaboration-tools-and-strategies-boosting-learning&utm_medium=link)

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.slidrocket.com/product/>

<sup>35</sup> [https://www.bigmarker.com/?utm\\_campaign=elearningindustry.com&utm\\_source=%2F6-online-collaboration-tools-and-strategies-boosting-learning&utm\\_medium=link](https://www.bigmarker.com/?utm_campaign=elearningindustry.com&utm_source=%2F6-online-collaboration-tools-and-strategies-boosting-learning&utm_medium=link)

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.sophia.org/tutorials/second-life-the-virtual-classroom>

In review of the national Connections Academy website it was discovered by OEQA consultants that of the 29 states having a developed Connections Academy, 20 provide computers to their users. These states either provide computers (one per household) to all their users or to only users who qualify for the federal government’s free and reduced-price lunch program. Some of these states may provide for elementary or for high school only to receive a computer. Only nine states, with Oklahoma being one, do not offer computers to their students.

**RECOMMENDATION**

**OKCA should replace its current computer policy with one that reflects a more accessible approach for all students, thus ensuring access to the instructional delivery program and curriculum.**

OKCA administration and board should abandon their current computer policy and replace it with one that provides loaner computers to all students (one per household). OKCA being a virtual charter public school catapults the need for students to have access to a computer into a critical realm of importance as compared to a traditional brick and mortar school. As a school who implements and receives funding as a Schoolwide Title I program, OKCA must adhere to providing programs and resources for all students. Additionally, state law does not permit charter schools to charge tuition or fees, so OKCA should not charge for any computers that they loan.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

This recommendation, if accepted, would eventually lead to a fiscal impact; however, the fiscal impact would only be an estimated guess at this time due to enrollment fluctuations. The fiscal impact chart below is based on the number of households represented by the enrollment as of October 30, 2017. OKCA would purchase the number of computers needed based on their newly adopted computer policy and enrollment.

Recommendation	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Provide loaner computers for all students. Based on 1,213 households multiplied by the cost of a refurbished laptop (\$250) to last for a five-year cycle.	(\$303,250)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

**Instructional Delivery & Local Assessments**

Assessments include everything from statewide accountability tests to district benchmarks or interim tests to everyday classroom tests. To contend with what some feel to be an over use of testing, educators should frame their view of testing as an opportunity to gain valuable information related to student learning of the content that has been taught. The more information we have about students, the clearer the picture we have about achievement or where gaps may occur. The Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE) explains that “in a balanced

assessment system, both summative and formative assessments are an integral part of information gathering”.<sup>37</sup>

Summative assessments are given periodically to determine at a particular point in time what students know and do not know. Summative assessment at the district/classroom level is an accountability measure that is generally used as part of the grading process. Below are some examples of summative assessments:

- State assessments (previously referred to as OCCTs and EOIs)
- District benchmark or interim assessments (NWEA, STAR, Study Island...etc.)
- End-of-unit or chapter tests/semester exams
- Scores that are used for accountability for schools (A-F Report Cards) and students (report card grades).

Formative Assessments are a critical part of the instructional process. Such assessments inform teachers about student understanding at a point when timely adjustments can be made before it is too late. When integrated into daily practice formative assessments provide the information needed to adjust teaching and learning while they are happening. These adjustments help to ensure students achieve targeted standards-based learning goals within a set time frame. AMLE gives an excellent frame of reference for formative assessments:

There are many classroom instructional strategies that are part of the repertoire of good teaching. When teachers use sound instructional practice for the purpose of gathering information on student learning, they are applying this information in a formative way. In this sense, formative assessment is pedagogy and clearly cannot be separated from instruction. It is what good teachers do. The distinction lies in what teachers actually do with the information they gather. How is it being used to inform instruction? How is it being shared with and engaging students? It's not teachers just collecting information/data on student learning; it's what they do with the information they collect.<sup>38</sup>

## **FINDING 2-17**

OKCA has system-wide expectations and processes for effective use of summative and formative assessments for frequent monitoring of students. Input from interviews and focus group discussions indicated the teaching staff is very clear in the expectations and use of formative and summative assessments. Teachers were aware of the state's Blueprints and Item Specifications as they relate to pacing the content and aligning formative assessments to determine mastery.

**Exhibit 2-27** highlights the competencies of OKCA faculty in understanding the importance of assessments as they relate to curriculum development and the implementation of differentiated instructional strategies. As indicated in the exhibit, an average of 94 percent of the surveyed staff

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.amle.org/BrowseByTopic/WhatsNew/WNDet/TabId/270/ArtMID/888/ArticleID/286/Formative-and-Summative-Assessments-in-the-Classroom.aspx>

<sup>38</sup> *ibid*

*strongly agree* or *agree* that the use of assessments are used for adjusting curriculum, informing instruction, providing feedback, and ensuring student learning.

**Exhibit 2-27**  
**Staff Survey Results Concerning the Use of Assessments**

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Teachers monitor and adjust curriculum, instruction, and assessments based on data from student assessments.	65%	28%	4%	2%	0%
Teachers use multiple types of assessments to modify instruction and to revise the curriculum.	54%	37%	9%	0%	0%
Teachers adequately prepare students for state mandated assessments (OCCT, EOI).	61%	37%	2%	0%	0%

*Source: OEQA- OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

## COMMENDATION

**OKCA implements procedures and communicates expectations to ensure all teaching staff understands the important role assessments must have in the teaching and learning cycle and includes the application of both formative and summative assessments.**

### D. STUDENT PERFORMANCE

#### *Student Performance on State Assessments*

To assist teachers and districts in teaching OAS and preparing students for the mandated assessments, the Oklahoma State Department of Education (SDE) provides a variety of resources on its website. These resources include the following:

- OAS by subject and grade level;
- test blueprints for each grade level and subject area test that show what percentage of the test each skill will represent;
- test/item specifications highlight important points about the items' emphasis, stimulus attributes, format, content limits, distracter domain, and sample test items;
- released test questions;
- writing samples;
- a list of words, called the academic vocabulary that are used on each test; and
- depth of knowledge (DOK) levels and percentage weights for all OCCT test questions in test specifications.

Due to new legislation that created Oklahoma's new standards (OAS), new assessments, and new cut scores, the SDE prepared a flyer for stakeholders explaining the new assessments and

the accountability associated with the outcomes. **Exhibit 2-28** provides the narrative from that flyer:

**Exhibit 2-28**  
**SDE’s What Families Need to Know Flyer**

In 2016, Oklahoma began teaching more comprehensive academic standards, which required new, more complex Oklahoma School Testing Program (OSTP) assessments to measure them. The new assessments were given to students in spring 2017, and test results were released in late fall 2017. Oklahoma assessment scores now track for college and career readiness and align with national benchmarks like the SAT, ACT and the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

Spring 2017 assessments required setting new performance levels for English language arts and math in grades 3-8 and 10 and for science in grades 5, 8 and 10. Performance levels, or “cut scores,” are presented in categories: Advanced, Proficient, \*Basic (Limited Knowledge) and \*\*Below Basic (Unsatisfactory).

In year 1 – Nov. 2017 – we will see a significant drop in the number of students reported as Proficient or Advanced. That decrease does not mean students are less skilled than last year or that a school is less effective. It means Oklahoma’s scores have been recalibrated to align with the knowledge and skills students need to be ready for college and career.

This school year represents a new beginning and A TOTAL RESET; no comparison is possible with student or school performance in past years. It will become the baseline for student and school performance as we continue efforts to position every Oklahoma student on the leading edge for success.<sup>39</sup>

*OSDE (2017)*

The 2017 Assessment results based on the new standards in Math and English are presented within this section. As stated in the narrative, “no comparison is possible with student or school performance in past years”. The results of the 2017 assessments will become the baseline for student and school performance, thus negating the need to use peer comparisons at this time.

**Exhibit 2-29** provides the English Language Arts (ELA) and Math scores for students in the grade levels 3-8 and 10th. In ELA, 42 percent of tenth grade students scored proficient or above, the highest percentage among all the grades. Only 18 percent of fourth-grade students scored proficient or above among all grade levels assessed in ELA. Most students scored lower in math than in ELA except for eighth-grade students. Fifty-eight percent of eighth grade students were proficient or above in Math – the highest among the grade levels that were assessed. Again, the fourth-grade had the least number of students scoring proficient or above among the grades assessed in math.

<sup>39</sup> [http://sde.ok.gov/sde/sites/ok.gov.sde/files/documents/files/What%20Families%20Need%20to%20Know%20Flyer\\_0.pdf](http://sde.ok.gov/sde/sites/ok.gov.sde/files/documents/files/What%20Families%20Need%20to%20Know%20Flyer_0.pdf)

**Exhibit 2-29**  
**Percentage of All OKCA Full Academic Year**  
**Grade 3-8 and Grade 10 Students Scoring Proficient or Above**  
**(2016-17)**

Grade Level	ELA/Reading	Math
Third	37%	41%
Fourth	18%	8%
Fifth	38%	38%
Sixth	32%	30%
Seventh	37%	28%
Eighth	40%	58%
Tenth	42%	16%

*Source: OEQA & SDE Data Services (2017)*

***Comparative Review of OKCA and Peers OCCT Performance***

As stated in SDE's *What Families Need to Know* flyer a total reset has occurred, making it impossible to compare student or school performance with past year performances. However, this should not negate the opportunity to explore and complete a comparative analysis of OKCA's past student/school performance with its selected peers' past performances based on the previous OCCT assessment system.

OEQA selected five traditional brick and mortar Oklahoma school districts as peer districts for OKCA based upon size, percentage of economically disadvantaged students and teacher/student ratio. Since there are no virtual peers for OKCA at this time that are of similar size, these five districts were formed based on OEQA methodology. OKCA and its five peers are part of the **Community Group E1**.<sup>40</sup> Peers include, Bethel, Chandler, Inola, Marlow, and Sequoyah. In **Exhibits 2-30** through **2-36**, a presentation of OCCT results for grades 3-8 and high school EOIs for OKCA and peers are provided.

<sup>40</sup> Community Group E1 = 1,000-1,999 students enrolled with less than 62 percent of students eligible to participate in the federally funded Free and Reduced Payment Lunch Program. <https://www.ok.gov/oeqa/documents/excerpt2015.pdf>

**Exhibit 2-30** shows OKCA, the peer districts, and the state average for *all full academic year* third grade students scoring proficient. Among its peers and the state average, OKCA had the least percent of third grade students scoring proficient or above on both math and reading.

**Exhibit 2-30**  
**Percentage of All OKCA and Peer Districts’ Full Academic Year**  
**Grade 3 Students Scoring Proficient or Above (2015-16)**

Entity	Math	Reading
<b>OKCA</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>30%</b>
Bethel	87%	90%
Chandler	61%	80%
Inola	43%	61%
Marlow	79%	84%
Sequoyah	92%	89%
<b>State Average</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>72%</b>

*Source: OEQA Data Files*

**Exhibit 2-31** compares fourth grade test scores. OKCA had the lowest percentage of students scoring proficient or above among the peers and the state’s average in math and reading.

**Exhibit 2-31**  
**Percentage of All OKCA and Peer Districts’ Full Academic Year**  
**Grade 4 Students Scoring Proficient or Above (2015-16)**

Entity	Math	Reading
<b>OKCA</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>58%</b>
Bethel	87%	77%
Chandler	77%	78%
Inola	76%	66%
Marlow	75%	76%
Sequoyah	75%	89%
<b>State Average</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>68%</b>

*Source: OEQA Data Files*

**Exhibit 2-32** compares fifth grade test scores. OKCA scored the lowest among peers and below the state average in math. In reading, OKCA had next to the lowest percentage of students scoring proficient or above among the peers and was below the state’s average. Inola was the lowest in reading proficiency.

**Exhibit 2-32**  
**Percentage of All OKCA and Peer Districts' Full Academic Year**  
**Grade 5 Students Scoring Proficient or Above (2015-16)**

Entity	Math	Reading
<b>OKCA</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>63%</b>
Bethel	80%	84%
Chandler	83%	83%
Inola	63%	57%
Marlow	78%	76%
Sequoyah	91%	94%
<b>State Average</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>73%</b>

*Source: OEQA Data Files*

**Exhibit 2-33** shows the results of sixth grade testing. OKCA was the lowest among peers and the state's average in math. In reading, OKCA was next to the lowest among the peers and lower than the state average. Inola sixth grade students scored lowest in reading.

**Exhibit 2-33**  
**Percentage of All OKCA and Peer Districts' Full Academic Year**  
**Grade 6 Students Scoring Proficient or Above (2015-16)**

Entity	Math	Reading
<b>OKCA</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>64%</b>
Bethel	74%	71%
Chandler	78%	84%
Inola	67%	61%
Marlow	80%	72%
Sequoyah	85%	81%
<b>State Average</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>64%</b>

*Source: OEQA Data Files*

**Exhibit 2-34** displays results for all students in grade seven. OKCA had the lowest percentage of students scoring proficient or above among the peers and the state's average in math. In reading, seventh grade students out-performed Inola, and tied with Sequoyah for next to lowest in reading and scored below the state's average.

**Exhibit 2-34**  
**Percentage of All OKCA and Peer Districts' Full Academic Year**  
**Grade 7 Students Scoring Proficient or Above (2015-16)**

Entity	Math	Reading
<b>OKCA</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>78%</b>
Bethel	68%	79%
Chandler	77%	84%
Inola	77%	71%
Marlow	84%	83%
Sequoyah	84%	78%
<b>State Average</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>72%</b>

*Source: OEQA Data Files*

**Exhibit 2-35** presents the results for all grade eight FAY students. OKCA the lowest among the peers in math and below the state's average. In reading OKCA scored third to the highest among all peers and slightly below the state's average.

**Exhibit 2-35**  
**Percentage of All OKCA and Peer Districts' Full Academic Year**  
**Grade 8 Students Scoring Proficient or Above (2015-16)**

Entity	Math	Reading
<b>OKCA</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>87%</b>
Bethel	49%	91%
Chandler	78%	79%
Inola	60%	85%
Marlow	74%	76%
Sequoyah	85%	93%
<b>State Average</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>76%</b>

*Source: OEQA Data Files*

**Exhibit 2-36** examines the EOI scores for Algebra I and English II. In Algebra I OKCA was the lowest among peers and below the state's average. OKCA was next to the highest among peers and above the state's average in percentage of students scoring proficient or above in English II.

**Exhibit 2-36**  
**Percentage of All OKCA and Peer Districts' Full Academic Year**  
**Students Scoring Proficient or Above (2015-16)**

Entity	Algebra I	English II
<b>OKCA</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>82%</b>
Bethel	74%	78%
Chandler	88%	86%
Inola	78%	77%
Marlow	88%	74%
Sequoyah	84%	73%
<b>State Average</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>77%</b>

*Source: OEQA Data Files*

### ***A-F School Grading System***

Oklahoma is currently in transition to a new Accountability System. Please note that the report cards in this report were developed under the previous system which concluded in SY2016.

In 2011, the Oklahoma Legislature adopted the A-F School Grading System and at the time of this report, the system is still the subject of much statewide concern and conversation. The intent of the school reform legislation was to challenge schools to motivate all students to meet high levels of college and career readiness.

The A-F report card process gives schools data to highlight areas of success and determine areas that need improvement. The A-F School Grading System is also based upon the concept that parents and community members should be able to quickly and easily determine how schools are performing, making it a user-friendly way for parents to determine their child's school performance.

On the latest A-F School Grade Card (2016) a school's grades were based:

- 50 percent on student achievement on the OSTP assessments;
- 25 percent on overall student growth; and
- 25 percent on student growth of the bottom 25 percent of students.

Depending on the school level, schools could earn up to 10 bonus points for such things as graduation rate and year-to-year growth. At the elementary level, attendance was the only factor considered for bonus points.

OKCA Elementary School's (grades KG-5) report card in 2015-16 is presented in **Exhibit 2-37**. The final grade was a 54, which received the letter grade of F.

**Exhibit 2-37  
OKCA Elementary School A-F Report Card 2015-16**

<b>Student Achievement (50%)</b>			
<b>Subject</b>	<b># of Students</b>	<b>Performance Index</b>	<b>Letter Grade</b>
Reading	118	50	F
Mathematics	117	38	F
Science	38	37	F
Social Studies	38	47	F
<b>Overall Student Performance Grade</b>	<b>311</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>F</b>
<b>Overall Student Growth (Progress Towards Proficiency (25%))</b>			
<b>Subject</b>	<b># of Students</b>	<b>Performance Index</b>	<b>Letter Grade</b>
Reading	71	66	D
Mathematics	71	46	F
<b>Overall Student Growth Grade</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>F</b>
<b>Bottom Quartile Student Growth (Progress Towards Proficiency) (25%)</b>			
<b>Subject</b>	<b># of Students</b>	<b>Performance Index</b>	<b>Letter Grade</b>
Reading	17	35	F
Mathematics	17	29	F
<b>Overall Bottom Quartile Grade</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>F</b>
<b>Final Grade: 54 (F) (including 10 bonus points)</b>			

*Source: SDE (2016)*

**Exhibit 2-38** provides a comparison of OKCA Elementary School report card scores for 2015-16 with the peer districts. OKCA was lower than the peer districts with and without bonus points.

**Exhibit 2-38  
OKCA Elementary Comparison of A-F School Grading System with Peers**

<b>2015-16 Entity</b>	<b>With Bonus Points</b>		<b>Without Bonus Points</b>	
	<b>Score</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Grade</b>
<b>OKCA</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>F</b>
Bethel	87	B+	77	C+
Chandler	83	B	73	B
Inola	70	C-	60	D-
Marlow	81	B-	71	C-
Sequoyah	93	A	83	B

*\*All elementary schools' (within the district serving tested grades) scores were averaged into one score  
Source: OEQA calculations of the SDE A-F School Report Cards - 2016*

In **Exhibit 2-39** OKCA Middle School's A-F report card indicates a final grade of D+ (68 points). The exhibit clearly indicates a much stronger performance in reading than any of the other content areas.

**Exhibit 2-39**  
**OKCA Middle School A-F Report Card 2015-16**

<b>Student Achievement (50%)</b>			
<b>Subject</b>	<b># of Students</b>	<b>Performance Index</b>	<b>Letter Grade</b>
Reading	170	77	C
Mathematics/Algebra I	170	51	F
Science	60	47	F
Social Studies/Geography/US History	123	57	F
<b>Overall Student Performance Grade</b>	<b>523</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>D</b>
<b>Overall Student Growth (Progress Towards Proficiency (25%))</b>			
<b>Subject</b>	<b># of Students</b>	<b>Performance Index</b>	<b>Letter Grade</b>
Reading	144	79	C
Mathematics/Algebra I	144	62	D
<b>Overall Student Growth Grade</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>C</b>
<b>Bottom Quartile Student Growth (Progress Towards Proficiency) (25%)</b>			
<b>Subject</b>	<b># of Students</b>	<b>Performance Index</b>	<b>Letter Grade</b>
Reading	36	47	F
Mathematics/ Algebra I	36	53	F
<b>Overall Bottom Quartile Grade</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>F</b>
<b>Final Grade: 68 (D+)</b> <b>(including 8 bonus points)</b>			

*Source: SDE (2016)*

**Exhibit 2-40** provides a comparison of OKCA Middle School report card scores for 2015-16 with the peer districts. OKCA scored below all peers with bonus points and without bonus points. OKCA scored similarly with one peer with and without bonus points.

**Exhibit 2-40**  
**OKCA Middle School Comparison of A-F School Grading System with Peers**

<b>2015-16 Entity</b>	<b>With Bonus Points</b>		<b>Without Bonus Points</b>	
	<b>Score</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Grade</b>
<b>OKCA</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>D+</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>D-</b>
Bethel	81	B-	71	C-
Chandler	80	B-	70	C-
Inola	72	C-	64	D
Marlow	82	B-	72	C-
Sequoyah	86	B	76	C

*Source: SDE (2016)*

In **Exhibit 2-41** OKCA High School's A-F report card indicates a final grade of C (70 points). The exhibit clearly indicates a much stronger performance in English than any of the other content areas with US History receiving a D the next highest on overall performance.

**Exhibit 2-41  
OKCA High School A-F Report Card 2015-16**

<b>Student Achievement (50%)</b>			
<b>Subject</b>	<b># of Students</b>	<b>Performance Index</b>	<b>Letter Grade</b>
English II/English III	182	81	B
Algebra I/Algebra II/ Geometry	238	59	F
Biology I	77	31	F
US History	89	60	D
<b>Overall Student Performance Grade</b>	<b>586</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>D</b>
<b>Overall Student Growth (Progress Towards Proficiency (25%))</b>			
<b>Subject</b>	<b># of Students</b>	<b>Performance Index</b>	<b>Letter Grade</b>
English II	70	91	A
Algebra I	67	69	D
<b>Overall Student Growth Grade</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>B</b>
<b>Bottom Quartile Student Growth (Progress Towards Proficiency) (25%)</b>			
<b>Subject</b>	<b># of Students</b>	<b>Performance Index</b>	<b>Letter Grade</b>
English II	17	76	C
Algebra I	16	56	F
<b>Overall Bottom Quartile Grade</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>D</b>
<b>Final Grade: 70 (C-) (including 2 bonus points)</b>			

*Source: SDE (2016)*

**Exhibit 2-42** provides a comparison of OKCA High School A-F report card scores for 2015-16 with the peer districts. As shown, OKCA’s grade (C-/70) was lowest among peers with and without bonus points. However, OKCA was within the same performance range of one peer when calculating with and without the bonus points.

**Exhibit 2-42  
OKCA High School Comparison of A-F School Grading System  
2015-16**

<b>Entity</b>	<b>With Bonus Points</b>		<b>Without Bonus Points</b>	
	<b>Score</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Grade</b>
<b>OKCA</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>C-</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>D+</b>
Bethel	85	B	78	C+
Chandler	86	B	78	C+
Inola	71	C-	70	C-
Marlow	87	B+	78	C+
Sequoyah	80	B-	73	C

*Source: SDE (2016)*

### ***Educational Planning and Assessment***

The ACT (originally an abbreviation of American College Testing), is a college readiness assessment for college admissions in the United States and specifically in the state of Oklahoma. It is produced by ACT, a nonprofit of the same name. The ACT assessment measures high school students' general educational development and their capability to complete college-level work with the multiple-choice tests covering four skill areas: English, mathematics, reading, and Science.

**Exhibit 2-43** compares the trends in OKCA's ACT composite scores over time with the selected peer districts previously mentioned in this chapter. OKCA tied with the state average with a 20.6 composite score. Inola had the lowest score among the peers with 19.9. Sequoyah had the highest ACT score among the peers with 21.9 composite.

**Exhibit 2-43**  
**ACT Composite Scores for OKCA, Peers and State Average**  
**(Class of 2016)**

<b>District</b>	<b>2016</b>
<b>OKCA</b>	<b>20.6</b>
Bethel	21.2
Chandler	21.2
Inola	19.9
Marlow	20.7
Sequoyah	21.9
State Average	20.6

*OEQA District Profiles and OSDE Files*

### **FINDING 2-18**

The State of Oklahoma, through legislation, require virtual charter schools to provide a minimum of six testing sites across the state to administer the mandated end-of-year assessments. OKCA provides 12 and sometimes 13 locations in the state which has contributed to their high percentage (96 percent participation rate) of students participating in these assessments. The approach for location selection is very strategic. OKCA analyzes students' residential status to determine where to facilitate the administration of these tests.

The planning for these multiple testing sites requires much thought and analysis. Such as ensuring test sites have significant WIFI accommodations for all students who are testing at that site. Also, OKCA has a vendor to supply the laptop computers needed for each site. This allows the teaching staff, who are also test proctors and test administrators to focus only on the students and not the setup of the laptops or the dismantling of such.

**COMMENDATION**

**OKCA strategically plans for organized testing sessions across the state while greatly exceeding the minimum number of annual testing sites contributing to a high percentage of student participation.**

**FINDING 2-19**

In addition to the ongoing monitoring and data analysis of student progress using formative assessments and benchmarks, there has been consistent use of the OCCT/EOI student performance results. All administrative staff reviews the data with an in-depth analysis from the central office level. Assessment results are then conveyed to the teachers by their assistant principals. Once the teachers receive their data there is a standardized process for ensuring the teachers collaboratively (with administrator) analyze the data and apply results to improve curriculum and instruction.

**Exhibit 2-44** presents several questions administered to the staff related to using the OCCT/EOI outcomes. As shown, the survey results indicate that teachers have experience with reviewing end-of-year assessment results. An average of ninety-six percent of survey respondents *agree* or *strongly agree* that they are trained in collecting, analyzing and using the data to inform instruction and that data analysis is part of the OKCA culture.

**Exhibit 2-44  
Staff Survey Responses Related to Data Analysis**

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Teachers monitor and adjust curriculum, instruction, and assessments based on data from student assessments.	65%	28%	4%	2%	0%
Our district has a continuous improvement process based on data, goals, actions, and measures for growth.	76%	22%	0%	0%	2%
Our virtual charter school has a systematic process for collecting, analyzing, and using student data.	78%	20%	2%	0%	0%
Our virtual charter school ensures that staff members are trained in the evaluation, interpretation, and use of data.	78%	17%	4%	0%	0%
Our virtual charter school uses data to monitor student readiness and success for the next level.	76%	20%	4%	0%	0%
Our district leaders monitor data related to district continuous improvement goals.	76%	22%	2%	0%	0%

*Source: OEQA- OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

Disaggregating and analyzing student performance data appeared to be a common practice for OKCA administration and faculty in order to serve each student. One of the impressive approaches used at OKCA is the use of “Issue Aware”. This approach allows the team to have clarity of focus on individual students and their learning needs.

In the age of high-stakes testing, each individual student must be prepared for the next level of learning. It is important that teachers use performance data to develop awareness and understanding of the skill gaps in student performance. The use of data also results in improving the rigor, pacing, and articulation of curriculum and instruction. As teachers monitor performance data, patterns of individual student learning successes and challenges become evident.

Use of student data helps teachers identify problems and proactively design instruction to ensure that each student’s learning gaps are addressed, and that the student is progressing to the best of their abilities. It is essential for teachers to have ongoing data to measure learning at each instructional segment. This allows teachers to make informed, collaborative decisions to address potential problems, target student deficiencies, and adjust instruction to meet immediate learning needs.

## COMMENDATION

**OKCA teachers and leaders possess the capacity for collecting and analyzing end-of-year summative assessment data to design instruction and remediation to ensure that there is consistent implementation using a system-wide process.**

## FINDING 2-20

A high student mobility rate affects student performance and delivers many challenges for schools serving these students. Due to the current nature of virtual charter schools, student mobility is much higher than what is seen at most traditional brick and mortar schools. Percentage of returning students has not increased since fall 2016-2017. Only an average of 43 percent of students returned over the past four years. In review of documents submitted by OKCA, there did not appear to be an intentional effort to examine student performance through the lens of persistency. The consultants did not note there was an ongoing effort to track the academic progress of students who have been enrolled at OKCA for three or more years as compared to students with less enrollment persistency.

Determining if students are performing better the longer they are enrolled at OKCA compared to those with less persistency would provide OKCA leadership with an excellent evaluative tool. This tool could lead to better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the instructional delivery program. **Exhibit 2-45** provides data from a statistical question in the Parent and Student Survey, which ask parents “*how long has your child attended OKCA?*”. The data gives a sample of the persistency level of students who are enrolled at OKCA. There were 408 respondents for this survey. Only 26 percent of respondents’ children have attended OKCA for three or more years: while a majority, 74 percent, of respondents’ children have attended two years or less. According to the Student Survey

eighty percent of respondents have been enrolled for 2 years or less with 21 percent attending OKCA for 3 or more years.

**Exhibit 2-45  
Parent and Student Survey: Number of Years Students Attended OKCA**

<b>Parent Survey: How long has your child attended Oklahoma Connections Academy (OKCA)?</b>	<b>Responses</b>
1-2 years	74%
3-4 years	19%
More than 4 years	7%
<b>Student Survey: How long have you attended Oklahoma Connections Academy?</b>	
1-2 years	80%
3-4 years	14%
More than 5 years	7%

*Source: OEQA- OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

**RECOMMENDATION**

**Prioritize this student performance issue by developing a plan that will include an ongoing examination of persistency data to determine if students enrolled at OKCA for three years or more are performing better than those students at lesser persistency levels.**

Moving forward, OKCA, adhering to the new assessments results as the baseline, should examine methodologies for measuring student performance progress as it relates to their persistency levels. **Exhibit 2-46** provides a potential sample for collecting and analyzing persistency performance levels for either ELA or math. The level of persistency has been identified in this chart, but certainly OKCA leadership could redefine the levels. As noted in this chart, the longer students were enrolled in this sample school, the more successful those students were on the end-of-year assessments.

**Exhibit 2-46  
A Sample of Performance Outcomes in ELA Based on Students' Persistence Status**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Persistence Status</b>	<b>Percent Proficient or Above</b>					
		<b>13-14</b>		<b>14-15</b>		<b>15-16</b>	
		<b>N count</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N count</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N count</b>	<b>%</b>
Reading	Level 1 <i>(Less than 1 year)</i>	258	53%	142	58%	121	55%
Reading	Level 2 <i>(1 year but less than 2)</i>	418	61%	375	59%	250	54%
Reading	Level 3 <i>(2 years but less than 3)</i>	266	67%	167	64%	174	59%
<b>Reading</b>	<b>Level 4 <i>(3 years or more)</i></b>	<b>61</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>66%</b>

*OEQA Data, BDLC Chart (2017)*

**FISCAL IMPACT**

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

**E. SPECIAL PROGRAMS**

School districts offer educational services to students through a variety of programs including regular education programs and special programs. Special programs are designed to provide quality services for student populations such as those in Special Education, Gifted and Talented Education, Title I remediation programs, and English Language Learner (ELL) programs.

***Special Education***

The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B* is the federal law that supports special education and related service programming for children and youth with disabilities ages three through 21. The major purposes of IDEA are:

- to ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for employment and independent living;
- to ensure that the rights of children and youth with disabilities and their parents are protected; and
- to assess and ensure the effectiveness of efforts to educate children with disabilities.

Oklahoma statutes require that each school district shall provide special education and related services for all children with disabilities who reside in that district in accordance with *IDEA*. This duty may be satisfied by:

- directly providing special education for such children;
- joining in a cooperative program with another district or districts to provide special education for such children;
- joining in a written agreement with a private or public institution, licensed residential child care and treatment facility, or day treatment facility within such district to provide special education for children who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, children who are blind or partially blind, or other eligible children with disabilities; or
- transferring eligible children and youth with disabilities to other school districts pursuant to the provisions of the *Education Open Transfer Act*.

Districts must develop an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for each child receiving special education services under *IDEA*. The IEP must include input from the parent, special education teacher, specialists, and regular education teachers and be aligned with education plans for children in regular education classrooms.

The reauthorization of *IDEA* in 2004, which went into effect in July 2005, includes provisions significantly changing the way learning-disabled students are identified. One change in the law addresses early intervention services and creating opportunities to determine a student's Response to Intervention (RtI). This approach was adopted in 2010 by SDE. With RtI, schools identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes; monitor student progress; provide evidence-based interventions; and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student's responsiveness. Based on the results of these interventions, the district may need a referral for additional testing to determine if there is a specific learning disability.

*IDEA* allows a school district to use up to 15 percent of its *IDEA* allocation to support services to students who have not been identified as needing special education services but who need additional academic and behavioral support to succeed in a general education environment. Funds may be used for professional development in scientific research-based interventions, literacy instruction, and the use of adaptive or instructional technology. It also permits use of funds for educational and behavioral assessments.

An effective special education program is defined by *IDEA* as having the following elements:

- pre-referral intervention in regular education;
- referral to special education for evaluation;
- comprehensive nondiscriminatory evaluation;
- initial placement through an IEP meeting;
- provision of educational services and supports according to a written IEP;
- annual program review;
- three-year re-evaluation; and
- dismissal from the special education program.

**Exhibit 2-47** shows comparison data on the percentage of special education students and number of full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers in special education for 2015-16. OKCA had second to the lowest percentage of students being served in special education and tied for the lowest number of special education teachers among the peers and lower than the state average. For the number of student-to-teacher ratio, OKCA was second to the highest among the peers and higher than the state average.

**Exhibit 2-47**  
**Students and Teachers in Special Education Programs**  
**2015-16**

Entity	Percentage of All Students	# of Special Education Teacher FTEs	# of Special Education Students per FTE
<b>OKCA</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>30</b>
Bethel	16%	8	27
Chandler	13%	6	26
Inola	17%	10	23
Marlow	15%	8	27
Sequoyah	13%	5	35
<b>State Average</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>24</b>

*Source: OEQA, Profiles Database All numbers have been rounded*

**Exhibit 2-48** provides a comparison of OKCA expenditures on special education with those of the peer districts. OKCA had second to the highest percentage increase from 2014-15 to 2015-16 for expenditures and the highest percentage increase in special education students served among peers and peer average. However, OKCA served next to the lowest number of special education students among peer districts during 2015-16 school year.

**Exhibit 2-48**  
**Special Education Expenditure Comparison**  
**2014-15 and 2015-16**

Entity	Total Expenditures 2015-16	Total Expenditures 2016-17	Percent Change	Number of Special-Ed Students 2015-16	Number of Special-Ed Students 2016-17	Percent Change
<b>OKCA</b>	<b>\$709,359.39</b>	<b>\$728,571.61</b>	<b>2.7%▲</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>12.7%▲</b>
Bethel	\$883,691.27	\$850,762.95	(3.7%)▼	217	236	8.8%▲
Chandler	\$545,749.47	\$558,479.12	2.3%▲	156	162	3.8%▲
Inola	\$1,043,284.32	\$1,039,655.40	(0.3%)▼	228	239	4.8%▲
Marlow	\$504,294.35	\$854,783.37	69.5%▲	217	216	(0.5%)▼
Sequoyah	\$557,808.78	\$531,236.95	(4.8%)▼	179	180	(0.6%)▼
<b>Peer Average</b>	<b>\$706,965.64</b>	<b>\$766,983.56</b>	<b>8.5%▲</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>4.0%▲</b>

*Source: OCAS District Impact Aid Letters and OEQA calculations (2017)*

Normally, performance reviews include examining trend data to assist with evaluating the performance of the special education programs. Due to the new standards, assessments, and cut-scores it is impossible to use trend data for this part of the performance review. Rather, an abbreviated look at special education students' performance on the last year of the OCCT scores for Math and Reading and the baseline data from the new Oklahoma School Testing Program (OSTP) assessments will be applied.

In review of the information in **Exhibit 2-49**, the percent of OKCA IEP students' scoring proficient or above on the state's OCCT (2015-16) reading assessments indicate students in grades 5-8 scored a higher proficiency percentage than in students in third and fourth grades. Several factors could have contributed to this outcome such as familiarity with the assessment venue and end-of-year assessment experience.

**Exhibit 2-49**  
**Percent of OKCA IEP Students' Scoring Proficient or Above on OCCT (2015-16) and OSTP (2016-17) Math & Reading**

Grade	OCCT 2015-16		OSTP 2016-17	
	READING/ Eng II	MATH/ Alg. I	ELA	MATH
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	14%	33%	17%	33%
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	17%	33%	21%	7%
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	38%	18%	0%	0%
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	40%	40%	*	*
7 <sup>th</sup> Grade	46%	38%	14%	14%
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	50%	13%	0%	6%
10 <sup>th</sup> Grade	38%	0%	8%	4%
Average	35%	25%	10%	11%

*OKCA State Assessment Report & Data Files \*= No data available*

**FINDING 2-21**

Based on survey results, interviews and focus group comments, there seems to be a high satisfaction with the services provided for special education students attending OKCA. **Exhibit 2-50** represents staff and parent responses related to their perceptions of the special education program. Ninety-eight percent of staff *strongly agree* or *agree* that OKCA provides related support services for all students based on their learning needs. A majority of parent responses (76 percent) *strongly agree* or *agree* that their child has access to support services based on his/her identified needs with 23 percent who had *no opinion* and one percent who disagree.

**Exhibit 2-50**  
**Survey Results Regarding Special Education**

Staff Survey Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
In our district, related learning support services (Special Ed, ELL, etc.) are provided for all students based on their needs.	82%	16%	2%	0%	0%
Parent Survey Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My child has access to support services based on his/her identified needs.	47%	29%	23%	1%	0%

*Source: OEQA- OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

## COMMENDATION

**OKCA special education staff is commended for providing special education students with a program that has instilled a growing confidence from parents and colleagues within the virtual charter district.**

## FINDING 2-22

Oklahoma Connections Academy provides Speech and Occupational Therapy services, which are conducted virtually, for OKCA students. Physical Therapy may be conducted virtually as well or face-to-face with students and are contracted by OKCA in the area where the student lives. Providing therapeutic services online for OKCA students who have disadvantaged circumstances can be a solution for many families. In addition, schools, whether virtual or traditional, can benefit from the cost-savings of online or telepractice/teletherapy can provide.

The American Speech-Language & Hearing Association (ASHA) describes telepractice as, “the application of telecommunications technology to the delivery of speech language pathology and audiology professional services at a distance by linking clinician to client or clinician to clinician for assessment, intervention, and/or consultation”.<sup>41</sup> Oklahoma has licensure laws and/or regulations for telepractice (§690:10-3-9 Use of Telepractice).<sup>42</sup> Over the last 15 years speech therapy done via video chat systems like Skype™ and Google Chat has become well accepted by the Speech-Language Pathology research and clinical communities. It is just as effective as face-to-face in-person therapy in most cases and is very cost-effective.<sup>43</sup> Practitioners should be aware of federal and state regulations relating to privacy and security, including those pertaining to

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.asha.org/Practice-Portal/Professional-Issues/Telepractice/>

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.asha.org/Advocacy/state/info/OK/Oklahoma-Telepractice-Requirements/>

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.coloradospeechtherapy.com/live-online-occupational-therapy/>

storage and transmission of client information. Clinicians providing services via telepractice are bound by federal and state regulations as they would be when providing in-person services.<sup>44</sup>

Families choose virtual education for numerous reasons such as health issues or severe disabilities, or due to their students' involvement in competitive pursuits or passions. Virtual therapy or telepractice, as it is commonly called, can support these families with the services provided wherever the student may reside without the inconvenience of traveling specifically if the family is in a remote location.

Telepractice can benefit schools whether virtual or traditional through cost-savings that the online therapy sessions can offer. Through interactive technology, telepractice solutions bridges fill gaps caused by therapist shortages, long or short-term leaves of absence, extended school closings, and homebound students. Other benefits include:

- Balance and manage caseloads across on-site and telepractice therapists
- Reduce indirect costs such as therapist's travel
- Stay in compliance with federal and state requirements

## COMMENDATION

**OKCA provides online therapy for students on IEPs, minimizing the inconveniences for families in disadvantaged circumstances while also taking advantage of cost-savings that can be used to enhance student learning.**

### *Gifted and Talented Program*

Oklahoma School code (210:15-23-1) states, the responsibilities of school districts and local boards of education in providing for a gifted and talented program:

The local board of education is responsible to provide gifted and talented educational program for all identified gifted and talented children who reside in the district. Gifted and talented educational programs must include multiple programming options which are matched with student's identified needs and interests.

Chapter 8 Article VII, Section 904 of the Oklahoma School Code (OSC) defines Gifted and Talented (GT) children as “those children identified at the preschool, elementary, or secondary level as having demonstrated potential abilities of high performance capabilities and needing differentiated or accelerated educational services.” The definition includes students who scored in the top three percent on any national standardized test of intellectual ability or who excel in the areas of creative thinking ability, leadership ability, visual performing arts ability, and specific academic ability.

No federal agency collects data on the number of gifted and talented students identified; however, the National Association for Gifted Children notes that between five and seven percent of students should be identified as such. Oklahoma law allows an unlimited number of students

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<sup>44</sup>[http://www.asha.org/PRPSpecificTopic.aspx?folderid=8589934956&section=Key\\_Issues#Privacy\\_and\\_Security](http://www.asha.org/PRPSpecificTopic.aspx?folderid=8589934956&section=Key_Issues#Privacy_and_Security)

to be counted as GT provided the students score in the top three percent (3%) of a nationally standardized intellectual ability test. Districts can also identify and receive State Aid for an additional eight percent (8%) of its students that are identified as GT through multiple criteria. Any students identified must be served

### FINDING 2-23

During interviews it was stated that OKCA does not identify students below the third grade for the GT program. **Exhibit 2-51** shows that OKCA's percentage of identified GT students has decreased over time while enrollment has increased by 45 percent over the past three years (fall 2014 to fall 2017). OKCA has the lowest percentage (5 percent) of GT students as compared to the five peers and the state's average. Bethel has maintained the highest percentage (15 percent) overtime.

**Exhibit 2-51**  
**Trend in Percentage of Gifted and Talented Education Students**

Entity	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	Percent-Point Change
OKCA	7%	5%	5%	(2)
Bethel	15%	13%	15%	0
Chandler	11%	11%	12%	1 ▲
Inola	12%	10%	10%	(2)
Marlow	10%	13%	13%	3 ▲
Sequoyah	15%	14%	14%	(1)
<b>State Average</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>0</b>

*OKCA's Demographic Data (2017)*

With the increase in enrollment there should also be an expectation of potential students that might qualify for the GT program. OKCA has chosen to not identify students for GT until third grade. There are many school districts that do not begin identifying gifted and talented students until third grade. There is a belief among some educators that giftedness cannot be properly identified in the early grades. However, the National Association for Gifted Children programming standards start with pre-kindergarten. The group's early childhood network position paper says that "providing engaging, responsive learning environments ... benefit all children, including young gifted children".

District students that have been identified in the gifted and talented program are serviced through a specific GT program approved by the Oklahoma State Department of Education. The GT facilitator provides multiple activities for students to engage in during online sessions. Also, there are special outings conducted periodically. Although OKCA is commended for their very active GT program, there should be a re-consideration for including younger children in the identification process. Possibly adding second grade as a pilot for the upcoming school year. See Chapter three of this report for more information on increasing revenue to support the GT program.

## RECOMMENDATION

**Reconsider the current GT identification policy to include younger students.**

### FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

#### ***F. STUDENT SERVICES***

Student services normally encompass counseling, health services and social services in most Oklahoma districts. The services provided may include:

- College and career counseling
- Health education and health services
- Substance abuse and psychological counseling

Recently, these services have played a more important role in helping students cope with the complexities of today's world. The role of the educational community in providing needed assistance for career and individual needs will continue to grow in future years.

#### ***Counseling and Guidance Services***

The Oklahoma State Board of Education Accreditation Standards for guidance and counseling are:

- *Accreditation Standard 6.02.* The counseling staff, parents, administrators, and others shall provide guidance and counseling program direction through involvement in assessment and identification of student needs.
- *Accreditation Standard 6.04.* The school shall develop a written description of a guidance and counseling program with special provisions for at-risk students. The program shall address assessed needs of all students, including those who are identified as at-risk and shall establish program goals, objectives, and evaluation.
- *Accreditation Standard 6.06.* Each school shall provide an organized program of guidance and counseling services that include: counseling services available to students; a planned sequential program of guidance activities that enhance students' development; appropriate referrals to other specialized persons, clinics, or agencies in the community; and coordinated services.
- *Accreditation Standard 6.08.* Each counselor shall follow a planned calendar of activities based upon established program goals and provide direct and indirect services to students, teachers, and/or parents.

The SDE publishes *The School Counselor's Guide: Developing a Comprehensive School Counseling Program Using Accreditation Standard VI*. This publication is designed to assist

school districts in strengthening existing programs or developing new ones. The major components of the defined guidance curriculum include Guidance Curriculum Domains (Academic Development, Career Development, and Personal/Social Development); Student Competencies; and Guidance Curriculum Delivery.

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) states:

*School counseling programs are collaborative efforts benefiting students, parents, teachers, administrators, and the overall community. School counseling programs should be an integral part of students' daily educational environment and school counselors should be partners in student achievement.*

ASCA recommends that school counselors divide time between four components:

- Guidance Curriculum – The guidance curriculum is structured developmental lessons designed to assist students. The guidance curriculum is infused throughout the school's overall curriculum and presented systematically through K-12 classrooms.
- Individual Student Planning – School counselors coordinate ongoing activities designed to assist students individually in planning.
- Responsive Services – Responsive services are activities meeting individual students' immediate needs that may require counseling.
- Systems Support – School counseling programs require administration and management.

#### **FINDING 2-24**

OKCA has created a student support engagement team, which comprises a three-member team who has recently served as teachers for OKCA. The student engagement specialists are assigned certain grade levels. The goal is to ensure at risk students (without an IEP) and students on 504 plans are provided advocacy and support for staying engaged in the online program. Each student has an engagement plan that he/she follows. The three-member team stated the best description of their job is that of academic advisor, counselor, and merging social worker. This support system is above the normal support of teachers, administration, and counselors. A apropos motto of this program is “engaging the unengaged”. The team comprises several layers of support to catapult each student and his/her family toward success and graduation. These positions are essential in a virtual environment.

There is considerable amount of training such as attending national training and working collaboratively with other Connection Academies across the nation. Technology and conflict resolution techniques are just a few components of their training. Members mentioned that the collaboration with each other and the counselors is extremely beneficial in the day-to-day operations.

**COMMENDATION**

**OKCA seeks to include positions and programs that will support students and their families in acclimating to the virtual school environment while making strong efforts in helping students graduate on time.**

**FINDING 2-25**

OKCA has hired a counseling staff that is not only highly qualified, but very competent in their work with students. The staff is composed of two full time counselors. One counselor is assigned to the 9th/10th grade students while the second counselor serves the 11th/12th grade students. They are engaged and ready to serve their students in preparing them for college and career and certainly in helping each reach the ultimate goal of graduation.

OKCA's counseling program functions based on several major goals. Some noteworthy goals are:

- Attend Juniors' and Seniors' live-lessons monthly to prepare students for graduation and post-secondary opportunities through various counseling activities.
- Ongoing collaboration with faculty and staff to ensure students' academic, career, social and emotional development.
- Provide on the OKCA's website message-board a PowerPoint with scholarship information. Also providing links on the message board.
- Weekly one-liners – short messages to Seniors regarding Senior Year Activities.
- Book-Me App for students to schedule appointments with counselor.
- Participate in National Live Lesson Counseling Series-Aligned to the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success.
- Develop "End-of-Year Survey" for students on what communication methods were most helpful.

**Exhibit 2-52** shows that 90 percent of the staff *strongly agree* or *agree* there are adequate counseling services for students enrolled in OKCA. Surprisingly, 10 percent of staff had *no opinion* about the quality counseling services at OKCA. In addition, 91 percent of staff *strongly agree* or *agree* that students receive information for college entrance requirements and scholarships while nine percent had *no opinion*. The staff seemed to be very informed with 91 percent who *strongly agree* or *agree* the vocational training prepares students for the workforce nine percent having no opinion.

**Exhibit 2-52**  
**OKCA Charter School Staff Survey Results**  
**Regarding Counseling Services**

Staff Survey Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Our virtual charter school provides high quality student support services (e.g., counseling, referrals, educational and career planning).	61%	29%	10%	0%	0%
Students receive timely information on college entrance requirements and scholarship offers.	67%	24%	9%	0%	0%
Students receive adequate vocational training to prepare them for the workforce, if they choose that path.	67%	24%	9%	0%	0%

*Source: OEQA - OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

**Exhibit 2-53** shows that 82 percent of parents *strongly agree* or *agree* the counseling services were of quality while 16 percent had *no opinion* and two percent *disagree* or *strongly disagree*. Since counseling at OKCA is focused mostly on secondary, it is not surprising that some parents have no opinion specifically if their students are at the elementary level.

**Exhibit 2-53**  
**OKCA Charter School Parent Survey Results**  
**Regarding Counseling Services**

Parent Survey Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Our virtual charter school provides excellent student support services (e.g., counseling, and /or career planning).	49%	33%	16%	2%	0%

*Source: OEQA - OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

**Exhibit 2-54** presents OKCA Student Survey responses related to the degree guidance counseling services contributed to developing their career goals. Eighty percent of the participants perceived that *some* or *very much* of the counseling program contributed to the development of their career goals while 20 percent felt *very little* or *not at all*.

**Exhibit 2-54  
OKCA Charter School Student Survey Results  
Regarding Counseling Services**

How much has your experience at this school contributed to your development in the following areas?	Not at all	Very Little	Some	Very Much
Developing career goals	6%	14%	46%	34%

*OEQA – OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

**COMMENDATION**

**OKCA provides an innovative and self-evaluative counseling program that contributes to secondary students’ well-being and achievement.**

**FINDING 2-26**

OKCA graduation rates have remained low as compared to traditional public schools. The most recent published graduation data found on the SDE’s website is for the school year 2014-15. **Exhibit 2-55** compares the 2013 and 2015 graduation percentage for OKCA, its traditional public-school peers, and the state’s average. Traditional school districts overwhelmingly surpass OKCA’s percentage of graduates in the 2015 school year, but not for the baseline year of 2013. Inola is the second lowest percent graduating both years. Chandler had the most graduating in 2013 and Marlow had the highest percentage graduating (over 95 percent) in 2015.

**Exhibit 2-55  
OKCA & Peers Graduation Rates (2015)**

Entity	2013	2015	Percent Point change
OKCA	85%	56%	(29 pp) ▼
Bethel	92%	92%	No change
Chandler	>= 95%	90%	(5 pp) ▼
Inola	83%	81%	(2 pp) ▼
Marlow	88%	>=95%	7+pp ▲
Sequoyah	93%	91%	(2 pp) ▼
<b>State Average</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>(2 pp) ▼</b>

*OSDE Graduation Data (2017)*

**Exhibit 2-56** compares OKCA’s graduation percentage with the four Virtual Charters in Oklahoma. OKCA experienced the highest percentage (56 percent) of students graduating among its virtual peers. Oklahoma Virtual Charter Academy (OVCA) was second to the highest with 40 percent graduating. Insight School of Oklahoma (ISOK) experienced the lowest percentage of graduates for the 2015 school year.

**Exhibit 2-56**  
**OKCA & Virtual Peers Graduation Data (2015)**

Entity	2015
<b>OKCA</b>	<b>56%</b>
Epic One-on-One	25%
ISOK	21%
OVCA	40%

*OSDE (2017)*

OKCA has initiated several programs to address the low graduation rate. Programs such as the new Student Engagement Team, engagement plans, and the goals set by the counseling program have all been implemented over the past two years. The secondary staff within this virtual district is very much data focused specifically with the unique Issue Aware system and its resulting engagement plans. These plans generate actions carried out as a collective approach.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

**Establish a formalized evaluation tool(s) to examine the implemented plans that are associated with the counseling program for the purpose of continuous improvement and increasing student graduation rates.**

Although the counseling program has instituted a self-evaluative survey, which is certainly a needed first step, OKCA leadership should build upon this approach through the design of other evaluative tools. Previously mentioned was the collection of persistency data using descriptive analysis to understand how well levels 3 and 4 students are performing on assessments as compared to students at levels 1 and 2. This concept could be transferred to the programs implemented such as the student engagement team's work with their assigned at-risk students.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

This recommendation may be implemented with existing resources.

*Chapter 3:*  
*Business Operations*

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## Chapter 3

# ***Business Operations***

This chapter addresses the business operations of Oklahoma Connections Academy (OKCA) and is divided into the following sections:

- A. Virtual Charter School Funding
- B. Oklahoma Cost Accounting System (OCAS), Revenue, and Expenditures
- C. Fund Balance
- D. Charter Management Organization
- E. Planning and Budgeting
- F. Purchasing
- G. Asset and Risk Management

OKCA's *Financial Statements* from Sanders, Bledsoe, and Hewett, dated June 30, 2016 state, "The District is a not for profit corporation in the State of Oklahoma filed [sic] with the secretary of state of Oklahoma. The District is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as an exempt organization under section 501(C)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code."

### **A. VIRTUAL CHARTER SCHOOL FUNDING**

Charter schools are funded differently than other public schools. Title 70 O.S. § 3-136 states, "The governing body of a charter school may not levy taxes or issue bonds." Because charter schools receive no local revenue from taxation, the vast majority of their funding comes from State Aid and is based on average daily membership (ADM). Furthermore, unlike other public schools and brick-and-mortar charter schools, virtual charter schools' initial State Aid allocation is derived from the number of enrolled students on August 1<sup>st</sup> of each year.

Title 70 O.S. § 18-200.1 allows the Oklahoma State Department of Education (SDE) to subtract certain local revenue, called chargeable income, from a school district's State Aid allocation. This chargeable income includes property valuation, gross production taxes, and motor vehicle tax collections. Because charter schools do not receive local revenue, this chargeable income is not subtracted from charter schools' State Aid allocation.

In regard to traditional public schools and brick-and-mortar charter schools, Title 70 O.S. § 18-201.1 states, "The weighted calculations... shall be based on the highest weighted average daily membership of the first nine (9) weeks of the current school year, the preceding school year or the second preceding school year of a school district, unless otherwise specified. The highest of the three (3) weighted average daily memberships shall be used consistently in all of the calculations..."

The law is different for virtual charter schools. Title 70 O.S. § 3-142 states, "...the weighted average daily membership for the first year of operation and each year thereafter of a full-time virtual charter school shall be determined by multiplying the actual enrollment of students as of August 1 by 1.333... At midyear, the allocation for the full-time virtual charter school shall be

adjusted using the first quarter weighted average daily membership for the virtual charter school.”

While all public schools that receive State Aid typically receive a midyear adjustment to their State Aid allocation, virtual charter schools often receive a greater percentage amount than other public schools. This is due to virtual charter schools’ initial allocation being based on a fixed weight of 1.333. Once all the weights are calculated after the first quarter, a virtual charter schools’ ADM weights are frequently greater than 1.333. Along with any increase in student membership after August 1<sup>st</sup>, the increased weights lead to additional state revenue at midyear.

**Exhibit 3-1** shows OKCA’s August 1<sup>st</sup> enrollment, initial State Aid allocation, October 1<sup>st</sup> enrollment, midyear State Aid adjustment, and weighted ADM. The school district’s August 1<sup>st</sup> enrollments have varied but tended to increase each year leading to an increase in initial State Aid. October 1<sup>st</sup> enrollments have also increased each year as well as the school district’s midyear adjustments. This exhibit shows that more students enroll after August 1<sup>st</sup> impacting the school district’s revenue later in the school year. It should be noted that midyear adjustments can be impacted by state revenue fluctuations.

**Exhibit 3-1  
OKCA Initial Enrollment and State Aid vs.  
October 1<sup>st</sup> Enrollment and Midyear Adjustment  
2014-15 to 2017-18**

Year	August 1 <sup>st</sup> Enrollment	Initial Weighted ADM	Initial State Aid	October 1 <sup>st</sup> Enrollment	First Quarter Weighted ADM	Midyear Adjustment
2014-15	805	1,073	\$3,306,558	955	1,399	\$4,302,721
2015-16	799	1,065	\$3,279,990	1,118	1,602	\$4,861,855
2016-17	876	1,168	\$3,556,845	1,246	1,858	\$5,559,051
2017-18	930	1,240	\$3,771,633	1,400	2,002	\$6,097,656

*Source: SDE*

The SDE does provide start-up funds to newly created charter schools, if funds are available. Oklahoma Administrative Code (OAC) 210:40-58-3(e) states, “...the maximum any charter school site may receive out of the Charter School Incentive Fund will be \$50,000. The \$50,000 maximum funding may be awarded based on multiple applications and awards from the same applicant.”

Traditional public schools and charter schools may receive transportation funding based on average daily haul (ADH) and a codified transportation factor. Average daily haul is the number of students in a school district that live one and one-half miles or more from a school site. Because virtual charter school districts encompass the entire state of Oklahoma, specific administrative rules govern their transportation funding.

OAC 777:10-5-3(d) states, “A statewide virtual charter school shall not be eligible to receive transportation supplement funding for transportation to a statewide virtual charter school



site...for any school year without a written transportation plan approved by the Statewide Virtual Charter School Board. The statewide virtual charter school shall submit its approved transportation plan to the State Department of Education Office of State Aid no later than July 1 prior to the school year for which the transportation plan has been approved.” At the time of this review, no virtual charter school had received approval for a transportation plan.

Traditional public schools and charter schools typically receive funding from the SDE for Child Nutrition Programs. Title 70 O.S. § 3-119 states, “Funds appropriated to the State Board of Education for School Lunch Matching and School Lunch Programs shall be apportioned by the State Board of Education to each school district for the purpose of providing meals for children in compliance with the National School Lunch Act and the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 and Public Law 91-248, as they may hereafter be amended or supplemented.” At the time of this review, no virtual charter school had received Child Nutrition funds from the SDE.

Evidence from a number of school performance reviews shows that many school districts do not receive enough transportation or Child Nutrition funds to cover the costs of these services. Currently, virtual charter schools do not receive these funds. However, virtual charter schools do not bear the costs of these services. If these services were to be provided and the funds allocated by the SDE, virtual charter schools’ revenues and expenditures would be impacted.

#### ***B. OKLAHOMA COST ACCOUNTING SYSTEM (OCAS), REVENUE, AND EXPENDITURES***

Title 70 O.S. § 3-136 states, “A charter school, to the extent possible, shall be subject to the same reporting requirements, financial audits, audit procedures, and audit requirements as a school district. The State Department of Education or State Auditor and Inspector may conduct financial, program, or compliance audits. A charter school shall use the Oklahoma Cost Accounting System to report financial transactions to the sponsoring school district...”

Title 70 O.S. § 3-136 further states, “No later than September 1 each year, the governing board of each charter school formed pursuant to the Oklahoma Charter Schools Act shall prepare a statement of actual income and expenditures for the charter school for the fiscal year that ended on the preceding June 30... statement of expenditures shall include functional categories as defined in rules adopted by the State Board of Education to implement the Oklahoma Cost Accounting System ...Charter schools shall not be permitted to submit estimates of expenditures or prorated amounts to fulfill the requirements...”

**Exhibit 3-2** shows the percentage breakdown of General Fund revenue from local and county, state, and federal sources for OKCA, other virtual charter schools, and the State for school year 2016-17. It should be noted that totals do not equal 100% due to rounding and some revenue (e.g. district, state categorical, etc.) not accounted for below. Most General Fund revenue comes from State Aid. OKCA codes in-kind contributions from Connections, LLC as Other Local Revenue (code 1600) in OCAS. Other virtual charter schools do not code in-kind contributions as local revenue.

**Exhibit 3-2  
Breakdown of General Fund Revenues by Source  
2016-17**

Entity	Local and County*	State Revenue	Federal Revenue
OK Connections Academy	19%	77%	4%
ABLE Charter School	<1%	94%	6%
Epic Charter Schools	<1%	97%	3%
Insight School of OK	<1%	94%	5%
OK Virtual Charter Academy	<1%	91%	9%
<b>State</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>11%</b>

*Source: SDE, OCAS*

*\*OKCA codes in-kind contributions from Connections Academy of Oklahoma, LLC as Local Revenue*

**Exhibit 3-3** below shows the General Fund revenue reported via OCAS by OKCA for school years 2014-15 to 2016-17. The majority of OKCA’s revenue comes from the state. The school district receives in-kind contributions from Connections Academy of Oklahoma, LLC and codes these as local revenue.

**Exhibit 3-3  
OKCA Reported General Fund Revenue**

School Year	Foundation & Salary Incentive Aid	State Categorical	Other Local Sources*	School Activity	Federal Revenue
2014-2015	\$4,088,915	\$34,867	\$1,189,801	\$0	\$0
2015-2016	\$4,716,028	\$81,270	\$1,265,130	\$0	\$386,424
2016-2017	\$5,424,568	\$24,272	\$1,312,232	\$0	\$262,109

*Source: SDE, OCAS*

*\*OKCA codes in-kind contributions from Connections Academy of Oklahoma, LLC as Local Revenue*

**Exhibit 3-4** below shows the expenditures reported via OCAS by OKCA for school years 2014-15 to 2016-17. OKCA revenues and enrollment increased each year. Per Pupil Expenditures (PPE) decreased in 2016-17 though total expenditures increased.

**Exhibit 3-4  
OKCA Reported Expenditures**

School Year	Expenditures	Oct. 1 Enrollment	PPE	State Avg. PPE
2014-2015	\$5,165,386	955	\$5,409	\$8,078
2015-2016	\$6,498,538	1,118	\$5,813	\$8,093
2016-2017	\$7,035,081	1,246	\$5,646	\$7,935

*Source: SDE, OCAS*



OKCA spent less per pupil than the State Average for all public schools each year; however, it should be noted that virtual charter schools do not receive any local funding via taxation and also lack Child Nutrition, Transportation, and many activity fund revenues and expenditures, which are included in the State Average. Thus with only State, Federal, and some district revenue and without various expenditures (e.g. Child Nutrition, Transportation, etc.), OKCA per pupil expenditures are less than the State Average.

**Exhibit 3-5** below shows the percentage of 2016-17 General Fund expenditures by function. OKCA purchases services through contracts with its charter management organization and various vendors. Other virtual charter schools are managed by national or local organizations and purchase services, such as staff and curriculum, from those organizations. Traditional public schools do not typically contract with management organizations and have a smaller percentage of expenditures coded as Purchased Services. These facts, along with other funding and regulatory differences, make it difficult to compare virtual charter school expenditures by function with State percentages.

**Exhibit 3-5**  
**Percentage Breakdown of 2016-17 General Fund Expenditures by Function**

Entity	Salaries	Benefits	Purchased Services	Supplies	Property	Other
OK Connections Academy	0%	0%	75%	25%	0%	0%
ABLE Charter School	59%	18%	19%	4%	0%	1%
Epic Charter Schools	45%	10%	38%	2%	3%	1%
Insight School of OK	0%	0%	94%	6%	0%	<1%
OK Virtual Charter Academy	0%	0%	85%	15%	0%	<1%
<b>State</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>1%</b>

*Source: SDE, OCAS*

### C. FUND BALANCE

The fund balance, often referred to as “carryover,” is defined as the excess of assets over liabilities and is used in future years to offset any revenue shortfalls or negative midyear adjustments that may occur. Fund balance is seen as the amount of cash that is not set aside for purchase orders, contracts, outstanding warrants, or other obligations. A school district’s fund balance policy can provide guidance for the development and implementation of an annual budget.

Because virtual charter schools receive their initial State Aid allocation based on August 1<sup>st</sup> enrollment each year and a fixed ADM weight of 1.333, these schools must wait until the midyear adjustment to receive their full weighted ADM for all students on their rosters between August 1<sup>st</sup> and October 1<sup>st</sup>. Title 70 O.S. § 3-142 states regarding charter schools, “Any unexpended funds may be reserved and used for future purposes.”

**Exhibit 3-6** shows carryover amounts from school years 2014-15 to 2017-18. As 2014-15 was the first year of operation for OKCA, there was no carryover from 2013-14. The OKCA carryover has varied from year to year. For 2016-17, OKCA carried over less than one percent (1%) of its 2016-17 revenue.

**Exhibit 3-6**  
**Carryover Amounts by Year**

Entity	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
OK Connections Academy	\$0*	\$15,933	\$7,910	\$10,248
ABLE Charter School	NA	\$0*	\$26,195**	NA
Epic Charter Schools	\$1,463,572	\$3,280,962	\$5,598,667	\$6,980,694
Insight School of OK	\$0*	\$1,085	\$10,254	\$2,359
OK Virtual Charter Academy	\$70,927	\$60,873	\$49,218	\$28,275

*Source: SDE, OCAS; State Auditor and Inspector, 2016 and 2017 Audited Financial Statements,*

\*First Year of Operation

\*\*Last Year of Operation

**D. CHARTER MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION**

Some, but not all, charter schools around the nation are managed by national or local organizations. These management organizations can provide a wide-array of services including staffing, technology, curriculum, financial support, and administration. For example, K12 Virtual Schools, LLC (K12) manages programs in 33 states. K12 manages both Insight School of Oklahoma and Oklahoma Virtual Charter Academy; however, each school has a separate and distinct contract with K12. Epic Charter Schools is managed by Epic Youth Services, LLC.

According to its website, Connections Education, LLC was established in 2011 and manages charter schools in Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. Connections Education, LLC is now owned by Pearson Education, Inc.

Connections Academy of Oklahoma, LLC (Connections, LLC) is the charter management organization for OKCA. Connections, LLC is paid monthly for its services by the school district's governing board. The *Educational Products and Services Agreement (Services Agreement)* between the governing board and Connections, LLC, dated March 2014, articulates the educational products and educational services provided by Connections, LLC to OKCA. Amendments to the *Services Agreement* were approved by the OKCA governing board in April 2017.

Educational products include instructional materials, computer technology, and supplies. Educational services include assessments and administrative, teaching, and support staff. Connections, LLC charges fees for these products and services determined by an agreed upon price structure. As stated in the *Services Agreement*, "As compensation for the Educational Products and Services provided...Connections and the Charter School shall negotiate in good faith a schedule of fees for services...that shall apply to the following Academic Year."

Most, but not all, the school district's revenues are paid to Connections, LLC for the products and services provided. The amounts paid to Connections, LLC are coded as Purchased Services and Supplies in OCAS. **Exhibit 3-7** below shows the General Fund expenditure amounts coded as such from 2014-15 to 2016-17. As enrollments have increased so too have the amounts paid to Connections, LLC for the services and products provided.

**Exhibit 3-7**  
**General Fund Expenditures for Purchased Services and Supplies**

Year	Purchased Services	Supplies
2014-15	\$3,658,084	\$1,500,538
2015-16	\$4,883,657	\$1,604,099
2016-17	\$5,273,942	\$1,749,450

*Source: SDE, OCAS*

**E. PLANNING AND BUDGETING**

Interviews and a review of documents showed that the annual budget for OKCA is prepared by fiscal staff from Connections Education, LLC and the OKCA Head of Schools. The budget is presented to the governing board for its approval at a spring board meeting. The budget is adjusted throughout the summer due to changes in enrollment, revenue, and expenditures. OKCA posts its yearly expenditures via a link to the SDE's website.

The budget is based on projected fall enrollment and accompanying State Aid allocations. The enrollment numbers are used to determine staff needs and associated costs. Because initial State Aid payments do not begin until the August 1<sup>st</sup> enrollment numbers are submitted, the approved budget is only an estimate of expected revenue and expenditures.

The *Services Agreement* states, "No later than the earlier of June 1 or fourteen (14) working days prior to any deadline...Connections agrees that it will present to the Charter School a balanced budget...for the following fiscal year. The Budget...shall be based on the applicable Fee Schedule. In the event that the Governing Board and Connections do not agree with the proposed balanced budget, the Parties agree to work together in good faith to resolve any disagreements by the earlier of June 30 or such date..."

The *Oklahoma Connections Academy Board of Directors Policy Manual* includes a policy, approved in September 2014, regarding the budgetary process. It states, "Working with Connections Academy...the School's Treasurer will coordinate the preparation of an annual operating budget with estimated revenue and expenditures in the spring prior to May 1 for the following fiscal year...The Board shall plan to review and approve the budget prior to May 1 of each year. Connections Academy, LLC will prepare a fiscal year forecast based upon updated assumptions before the opening of the new School year." The school district's treasurer is Jack Jenkins, CPA.

Similar to K12 Virtual Schools, LLC and its agreement with Insight School of Oklahoma and Oklahoma Virtual Charter Academy, Connections, LLC assumes all financial risks for the

management of OKCA. In other words, Connections, LLC will credit OKCA certain amounts each year so that OKCA does not expend more revenue than it has available. The *Services Agreement* states, “In the event that, as of June 30 of any year during the Term, Total Revenues are less than the Charter School's expenditures...Connections shall issue a credit or discount to the Charter School to the extent required to maintain positive Net Assets...” The *Services Agreement* further states, “In order for the Charter School to qualify for Deficit Protection, both Parties must formally approve the Charter School’s annual budget...spending outside the approved budget...shall not be subject to Deficit Protection.”

The *Financial Statements* from June 2016 noted, “Per the agreement with Connections, if the total expenditures exceed the amount of total funds available, Connections will issue a credit or what is referred in the financial pages as an in-kind contribution for the amount of expenditures that would cause the District to go into a fund balance deficit. Any excess expenditure owed to the related party is thus forgiven.”

**FINDING 3-1**

OKCA is protected from financial risks per its *Services Agreement* with Connections, LLC. Connections, LLC ensures the financial stability of OKCA by issuing credits against its contracted service fees. This guarantees that the school district can end each school year without a deficit even during times of budget cuts and financial uncertainty.

Called in-kind contributions in OKCA’s *Financial Statements*, these credits are show in **Exhibit 3-8** below. The four-year totals are in excess of five million dollars. As a result of the credits, Connections, LLC has provided additional products and services to Oklahoma students at no cost to OKCA.

**Exhibit 3-8**  
**Connections, LLC’s In-kind Contribution Amounts by Year**

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18*
In-kind Contribution Amount	\$1,406,501	\$1,264,500	\$1,294,000	\$1,332,000

*Source: OKCA, Financial Statements and Internal Budget Planning Documents*  
\* Projected

**COMMENDATION**

**OKCA is protected from financial risks and deficits via its *Services Agreement* with Connections, LLC.**

**FINDING 3-2**

Although the OKCA governing board and Connections, LLC national and local leadership have input into the budgetary planning process, other local stakeholders do not. The budget is presented at a local governing board meeting, but parents and staff are not involved in the process. Unlike other public schools, OKCA school staff are not employees of the school district,



and parents may not live close to board meeting sites. As a result, local stakeholder involvement may naturally be limited.

**Exhibit 3-9** below shows the responses from 51 OKCA staff and 408 OKCA parents regarding the budgetary process and the school district's financial condition. Over half *agreed* with the statement, "OKCA's financial condition is transparent and understood." Less than half of the staff *agreed* with the statement, "OKCA stakeholders are invited to provide input into the budgetary process." This may show that many staff are unaware of the process, and some do not believe the statement to be true.

### **Exhibit 3-9 Survey Results Regarding the Budget**

Group	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Staff	OKCA's financial condition is transparent and understood.	35%	30%	30%	0%	4%
	OKCA stakeholders are invited to provide input into the budgetary process.	26%	22%	43%	4%	4%
Parents	OKCA's financial condition is transparent and understood.	46%	36%	16%	2%	0%
	OKCA ensures equity and the effective use of financial resources.	44%	33%	22%	1%	0%

*Source: OEQA - OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

## **RECOMMENDATION**

### **Include local stakeholders in the budgetary process.**

Though charter schools are not required to follow the School District Budget Act it does, "make available to the public and investors sufficient information as to the financial conditions, requirements, and expectations of the school district" (Title 70 O.S. § 5-155). The OKCA governing board should communicate with parents and staff via various media platforms regarding the budgetary process and hold an informational meeting regarding the budget. The governing board could also elicit input electronically. Though teaching staff are Connections, LLC employees, they are Oklahoma residents and sometimes parents of OKCA students. Thus, OKCA teaching staff may also be included. The net result should be more transparency, communication, and input regarding the process.

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

## **FINDING 3-3**

OKCA does not have a formal target for carryover amounts each year. Though interviews determined that the school district administration and governing board desire to carry over approximately \$10,000 per year, no formal carryover policy or target exists. Connections, LLC does not dictate a carryover amount in the *Services Agreement*.

The governing board does not use all revenues for its *Services Agreement* with Connections, LLC. Title 70 O.S. § 3-142 states regarding charter schools, “Any unexpended funds may be reserved and used for future purposes.” **Exhibit 3-10** shows carryover amounts from school years 2014-15 to 2017-18. The OKCA carryover amount has varied each year. For 2017-18, OKCA carried over less than one percent (1%) of its 2016-17 revenue.

**Exhibit 3-10  
Carryover Amounts by Year**

Entity	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
OKCA	\$15,933	\$7,910	\$10,248

*Source: Source: SDE, OCAS; State Auditor and Inspector, 2017 Audited Financial Statements*

**RECOMMENDATION**

**Develop a target amount for carryover each year.**

Virtual charter schools receive their initial State Aid allocation based on August 1<sup>st</sup> enrollments each year and a fixed ADM weight of 1.333. These schools must wait until the midyear adjustment to receive their full weighted ADM for all students on their rosters between August 1<sup>st</sup> and the end of the first quarter. With less revenue to expend between August and January, it is in the best interest of the virtual charter schools to maintain a healthy end-of-year fund balance to carry over into the next school year.

Though OKCA is protected from deficit by its *Services Agreement* with Connections, LLC, the governing board should develop a target amount for carryover each fiscal year. This carryover can be used for local expenditures not tied to the *Services Agreement*. This amount can be determined during the budgetary planning process with consultation with Connections, LLC and other school district stakeholders. This may result in a change to the *Services Agreement*.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

**FINDING 3-4**

OKCA does not have dedicated staff to seek out and apply for grants. Interviews showed that some grants are applied for and received, but the method and process is ad hoc. Most interviewed staff were not aware of grant opportunities. Because OKCA serves a diverse population, they may qualify for a variety of grants from corporations, nonprofits, and government entities.

Grants can often bring in funds and materials to schools. Some grants require rigorous reporting and monitoring while others only require simple follow-up. The state and federal governments offer grant opportunities on a regular basis. Local and national businesses and nonprofits also award grants to schools yearly. In times of budget difficulties, grants can help schools implement needed programs and provide funding for services.

**Exhibit 3-11** below shows the responses from 51 OKCA staff regarding grant applications and opportunities. Just over half of the respondents had *no opinion* or *disagreed* that the school actively applies for grants. Forty-eight percent, however, *agreed* that the school does apply for grants, which may be the staff that was impacted by particular grants the school has received.

**Exhibit 3-11  
Staff Survey Results Related to Grants**

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
OKCA actively applies for competitive state /federal grants and other grant opportunities.	24%	24%	46%	4%	2%

*Source: OEQA – OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

## RECOMMENDATION

**Develop a process to seek, apply for, and monitor grants from local, state, and national entities.**

OKCA should develop a process to seek, apply for, and monitor grants. This process could include employing an individual on a part-time basis or including the position in the *Services Agreement* with Connections, LLC. The task could also be assigned to current staff and include a stipend. After determining whether the school could benefit from the grants, the person could apply for the grants, and if awarded, monitor the grants' implementation and reporting. Monitoring grant implementation and reporting is typically a requirement of any grant, and often is an overlooked responsibility.

## FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation may come at a cost initially, but administration costs can typically be written into the grant applications and can be used to pay, at least partially, for the cost of this position.

## FINDING 3-5

OKCA codes in-kind contributions from Connections, LLC as Other Local Revenue (code 1600) in OCAS. Other virtual charter schools do not code in-kind contributions as local revenue. As stated above, charter schools do not receive local tax revenue and are heavily reliant on State Aid.

The SDE's OCAS manual defines Other Local Sources of Revenue to include, "Revenue received from a philanthropic foundation, private individuals, or private organizations for which no repayment or special service to the contributor is expected." Correspondence with the Financial Accounting division of the SDE found that non-cash contributions (in-kind) should not be coded as local revenue.

## RECOMMENDATION

### Do not code non-cash in-kind contributions from Connections, LLC as local revenue in OCAS.

The Head of Schools should work with pertinent staff to see that future non-cash in-kind contributions from Connections, LLC are not coded as Other Local Revenue (code 1600) in OCAS. This will help to clarify the revenue streams for OKCA and not give the impression that local revenue is collected by the charter school.

#### F. PURCHASING

The *Oklahoma Connections Academy Board of Directors Policy Manual* states, “The School will maintain the following principles in its ongoing fiscal management practices 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 *Services Agreement* states, “Connections will provide treasury and accounting reports for all Connections activities under this Agreement, and for any other Charter School activities as may be reasonably requested by the Charter School.”

Revenue received from the SDE and other sources are deposited into a checking account with Arvest Bank. Checks are then written to Connections Education, LLC and other vendors throughout the school year once invoices are submitted and approved. The school district does use a number of purchasing cards, and those receipts and statements are reconciled by pertinent staff.

The *Oklahoma Connections Academy Board of Directors Policy Manual* further states, “All purchases over Five Thousand (\$5,000) Dollars must include documentation of a good faith effort to secure the lowest possible cost for comparable goods or services. The Chair shall not approve purchase orders or check requests lacking such documentation and must comply with the School’s Procurement Policy...The Principal or designee may purchase supplies, materials, equipment, and services up to the amounts specified in the approved budget or per an approved Board action...”

The *Employee Handbook* states, “Under no circumstances is an employee, other than those who have purchasing responsibility authorized in writing, to commit to any purchase or agreement that financially obligates us. Should you have a requirement to procure goods and services, you must obtain the appropriate authorizations from your manager in accordance with the school fiscal policies. Failure to obtain the proper authorizations/approvals will result in disciplinary action and/or a requirement that the individual accept personal responsibility for an obligation wrongfully made in our name.”

Interviews determined that employees are aware of the purchasing procedures and must receive approval before purchasing any items with school district funds. Interviewees stated that the

purchasing process was simple to follow and mostly handled by school district leadership. Interviewees believed that necessary and justifiable purchases were typically approved.

**Exhibit 3-12** below shows the responses from 51 OKCA staff regarding the perception of district administrators' and board members' compliance with policies, procedures, laws, and regulations. A vast majority of the respondents *agreed* with the survey statement. Though the perceptions are not specific to purchasing procedures, they do provide insight into the overall operations of OKCA.

**Exhibit 3-12**  
**Staff Survey Results Related Compliance with Policies, Procedures, etc.**

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
OKCA's administrators and district board complies with all policies, procedures, laws, and regulations.	83%	15%	2%	0%	0%

*Source: OEQA - OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

**FINDING 3-6**

OKCA has clear purchasing procedures in place. Purchasing is handled at the local level and at the national level by Connections, LLC. Encumbrances, purchase orders, invoices, and receipts are reconciled in a timely and organized manner. Each purchase requires multiple reviews at the local and national level. Little cash and few checks are typically handled at the local level and mainly when dealing with the activity fund subaccount.

OKCA has written fiscal policies and procedures. These policies and procedures are articulated in *Employee Handbook* and *Oklahoma Connections Academy Board of Directors Policy Manual*. For example, the *Board of Directors Policy Manual* states, "The School will develop and maintain simple check request and purchase order forms to document the authorization of non-payroll expenditures...All proposed expenditures must be approved by the Principal, who will review to determine whether it is consistent with the Board-adopted budget.. All check requests and purchase orders over One Thousand (\$1,000) Dollars must be co-signed by two Board Members who have been approved as a signatory on the School's checking account."

**COMMENDATION**

**OKCA has written purchasing procedures, which are followed by pertinent staff.**

**G. ASSET AND RISK MANAGEMENT**

OKCA's *Financial Statements* stated in June 2016, "The District is exposed to various risks of loss related to torts; theft of, damage to and destruction of assets; errors and omissions; injuries to employees; or acts of God. The District purchases commercial insurance to cover these risks, including general and auto liability, property damage, and public officials liability. Settled claims

resulting from risks have not exceeded the commercial insurance coverage in any of the past three fiscal years.”

OAC 210:40-87-6 states, “Each charter school shall be required to furnish and maintain liability insurance coverage and fidelity bonding of the same terms, conditions, types and amounts required of public schools under Oklahoma law...Charter school officers and/or employees shall be required to furnish and maintain surety bonds with the same terms, conditions, penalty, types and amounts required of public school officers and/or employees under Oklahoma law.”

A review of documents showed that Connections, LLC has purchased commercial general liability and automobile liability insurance in excess of \$1,000,000. Connections, LLC has also purchased property insurance for \$100,000.

The *Services Agreement* states, “Connections will maintain and keep in force no less than substantially such amounts of insurance...to cover insurable risks associated with operations under this Agreement...The Charter School shall maintain and keep in force insurance at no less than the minimum levels required by the Charter Petition, applicable law, or both.”

Title 70 O.S. § 5-116a states, “The superintendent and any financial officer of a school district shall be required to furnish a surety bond in the penal sum of not less than One Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$100,000.00) or an amount otherwise set by law or set by the State Board of Education, to be approved as provided by law, and to assure the faithful performance of the duties of the covered officer and employees.”

The school district’s auditors found in June 2016 that the Superintendent, in this case the Head of Schools, and Treasurer maintained bonds of \$100,000 each. The Encumbrance Clerk, Board Minutes Clerk, and Deputy Board Minutes Clerk maintained bonds for \$1,000 each.

OKCA keeps an inventory of computer hardware, phones, and other office items. Inventory procedures are documented, and interviewees were able to explain the process. Teaching staff are provided laptops, monitors, internet phones, and document cameras through Connections, LLC.

The *Employee Handbook* states, “Generally, home-based employees will be provided with a desktop computer and related equipment. Equipment supplied by us is to be used for business purposes only. Employees must take appropriate steps to protect all company-owned equipment from damage and theft. We will maintain an inventory of all equipment and/or materials that are provided to employees working at home. Such equipment will remain the property of us at all times. Upon termination of employment, employees are required to return all company-owned equipment and other property to us, unless other arrangements have been made.”

**Exhibit 3-13** below shows the survey results from 51 OKCA staff regarding inventorying of equipment. Three-quarters of the respondents *agreed* that an accurate inventory of hardware and materials is kept by the school district; about one-quarter had *no opinion*.

**Exhibit 3-13**  
**Staff Survey Results Related to Inventory**

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
An accurate inventory of hardware and materials is kept by the school.	43%	33%	24%	0%	0%

*Source: OEQA – OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

Some, but not all, students receive laptops directly from Connections, LLC. The *Oklahoma Connections Academy School Handbook Supplement 2017-18* states, “Oklahoma Connections Academy families will be expected to provide their own computers and Internet access.” The *Connections Academy School Handbook General Portion 2017-18* states, “All school-provided non-consumable...materials and equipment must be returned to Connections Academy...for any of the following reasons...” The reasons include the school year has ended and the student is no longer enrolled.

### **FINDING 3-7**

OAC 210:25-5-5(a) states, “The statutes of the State of Oklahoma require the board of education of each school district to cause an annual audit of the district's financial activity. The audit must be made in accordance with State Statutes, State Board of Education Regulations and the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (2 C.F.R. Part 200). The State Board of Education shall examine each audit report and demand corrections of any existing deficiencies. It is mandatory that State Aid payments be withheld during noncompliance with the "School Audit Law" at 70 O.S. § 22-101 et seq.”

In order to be in compliance with Oklahoma statute and rules, OKCA conducts annual financial audits. OKCA’s Financial Statements from Sanders, Bledsoe, and Hewett, dated June 2015 and June 2016, found “no significant deficiencies in internal controls” and “no instances of noncompliance which are material to the financial statements.”

### **COMMENDATION**

**OKCA is commended for receiving no findings of significant deficiencies in its financial audits.**

### **FINDING 3-8**

Interviews and a review of documents show that OKCA does not have a detailed investment policy. The *Oklahoma Connections Academy Board of Directors Policy Manual* states, “Funds will be deposited in non-speculative accounts including federally insured savings or checking accounts or invested in non-speculative federally backed instruments.” The *Financial Statements*, dated June 2016, states, “The District does not have a formal policy that limits investment maturities as a means of managing its exposure to fair value losses from increasing interest rates.” OCAS reports show \$.01 in interest earned in 2014-15, \$1.00 earned in 2015-16, and \$.01 earned in 2016-17.

Oklahoma statute requires a more detailed investment policy. Title 70 O.S. § 5-115(G) states, “The board of education shall, each month, set aside funds to an operating account and to an investment account. Investments by the treasurer shall be made in accordance with a written policy adopted by the board of education. The written investment policy shall address liquidity, diversification, safety of principal, yield, maturity, quality of the instrument, and capability of investment management. Acting within the investment policy, the treasurer shall place primary emphasis on safety and liquidity in the investment of funds...”

**RECOMMENDATION**

**Develop and approve a more detailed investment policy.**

Though school districts are limited on their investment options by law (Title 70 O.S. § 5-115), investments should be made that maximize the rates of return. This can assist school districts in generating revenue. The governing board should develop and approve a more detailed investment policy as required by Oklahoma statute. This policy should be followed to increase earnings and maximize returns.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources and may generate additional revenue.

**FINDING 3-9**

OKCA keeps some checks and cash in the central office. Mostly for activity funds, these checks and cash are kept in a locked file cabinet and deposited as necessary. Though this location is somewhat secure, it is neither impregnable nor fire-proof.

**RECOMMENDATION**

**Purchase a fire-proof safe for checks and cash.**

Checks and cash, though rarely stored for long periods, should also be secured. OKCA administration should research and then purchase a right-sized fire-proof safe for checks and cash. This safe can then be kept in a secure location within the central office.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

Prices and sizes of fire-proof safes vary. A search of the internet revealed safes ranging in price from less than \$100 to over \$5,000. Based on the needs of the school district, a roughly 24 inch cubic fire and water-proof safe can be purchased for about \$500.

Recommendation	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Purchase fire-proof safe	(\$500)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0



*Chapter 4:*  
*Facilities Use and Management*

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## Chapter 4

# Facilities Use and Management

This chapter addresses the facilities use and management of Oklahoma Connections Academy (OKCA) in the following sections:

- A. Central Office
- B. Testing Sites

### A. CENTRAL OFFICE



The Oklahoma Administrative Code (OAC) 777:10-1-3 states, “Every approved statewide virtual charter school must have a public site that allows the public to have access to the main office of the school.” OKCA’s central office is located in Bartlesville, Oklahoma at 2425 Nowata Place, Suite 202. There are no other school sites located in the state.

The central office is located in a commercial office suite, which includes administrative offices, support staff pool area, conference room, board room, and various cubicles for teaching staff. These facilities are modest from the outside, but their interior accommodations are flexible and well suited for the school administration’s needs. The current site was determined by the Head of Schools with consultation from other Connections, LLC staff.



Up to 20 OKCA staff work in the central office at least three days per week. Other staff members are home officed throughout the state. The staff members in the central office work in offices and cubicles. Some cubicles are shared while others are assigned to a specific person.



OAC 777:10-5-3 states, "...No statewide virtual charter school or employee of the statewide virtual charter school shall provide face-to-face instruction to any charter school student unless: (1) The instruction occurs at either: (A) The legal residence of a student or the parent/legal guardian of a student; or (B) A facility approved as a charter school site of the statewide virtual charter school in which the student is enrolled..."

Interviewees stated that students are rarely seen in the central office except during enrollment and state testing. Furthermore, OKCA staff members typically do not meet face-to-face with any students except during state testing and on field trips. The *Employee Handbook*, dated April 2017, states, "Employees are strictly prohibited from providing transportation to students for any purpose. An employee may be permitted to visit the home of a student if the student's parent or guardian is present. Prior to such a visit, an employee must gain approval from the Principal or Principal's designee. Further, any employee visiting a student's home must do so with at least one other employee and is never permitted to conduct a home visit without another employee in attendance."

The *Educational Products and Services Agreement (Services Agreement)* between the governing board and Connections, LLC, dated March 2014, states, "The Charter School may contract with Connections to provide or maintain in good working order one or more offices, capital equipment, or furniture and fixtures...The locations, lease terms, and capital purchases required for all facilities provided under this Agreement will be subject to the approval of the Governing Board. Connections agrees that it will have no beneficial financial interest in any approved lease...If Connections has entered into the facility lease for the Charter School, Connections shall permit the Charter School to hold public meetings of the Charter School at such offices, without payment of rent."

Connections, LLC leases property from Sigmon Properties, LLC for the OKCA central office. According to the lease, dated November 2014, the central office is approximately 4,050 square feet and nearly doubled in size from 2,095 due to expansion and renovation in 2015. Sigmon

Properties, LLC is responsible for the maintenance of the office space including the HVAC. Connections, LLC is responsible for utilities, telephones, internet, and custodial services. A lease extension was signed in January 2017. Monthly lease rates are shown in **Exhibit 4-1** below.

**Exhibit 4-1**  
**Monthly Lease Rates**

Term	Amount
March 2015 to August 2016	\$2,682*
September 2015 to August 2016	\$4,905
September 2016 to August 2017	\$5,082
September 2017 to August 2018	\$4,881
September 2018 to June 2019	\$4,975

*Source: OKCA Lease Agreements*

*\* Rate before expansion*

Janitorial services for the central office are provided via contract between Connections, LLC and Spencer Management, Inc. The contract, dated September 2015, states, “CONTRACTOR agrees to perform the Services for School in accordance with industry standards, School directions, and all applicable Federal, State & local laws, rules and regulations...” The janitorial service contract contains provisions for background checks of janitorial staff, insurance coverage, and termination. The janitorial service fee is \$325 per month and includes weekly cleanings of the central office.

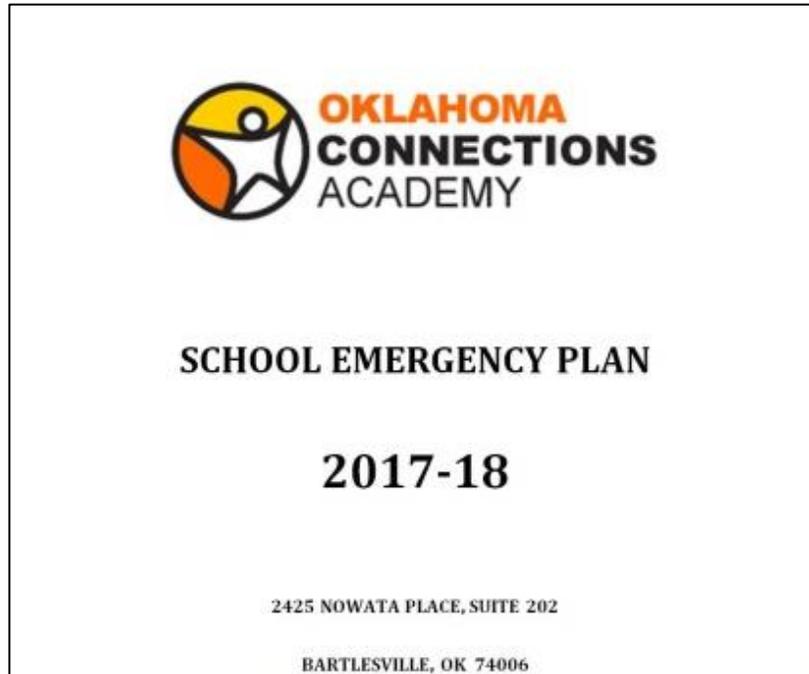
Title 63 O.S. § 681 states, “...Each school... shall have written plans and procedures in place for protecting students, faculty, administrators and visitors from natural and man-made disasters and emergencies. Plans shall be reviewed and updated annually... and placed on file at each school district and each local emergency response organization within the district, which may include police, fire, emergency medical services, sheriff and emergency management of the appropriate jurisdiction...”

Title 70 O.S. § 5-148 states, “Each district board of education shall ensure that a minimum of four security drills are conducted at each public school within the district each school year... Security drills shall be conducted for the purpose of securing school buildings to prevent or mitigate injuries or deaths that may result from a threat around or in the school. The drills shall conform to the written plans and procedures adopted by the district... All students and employees shall participate in the drills, with the extent of student involvement to be determined by the district.”

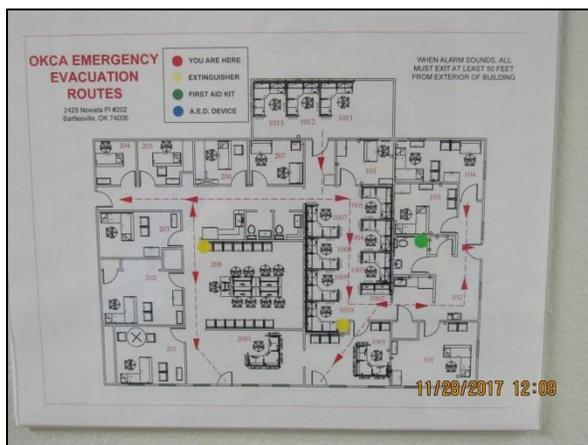
Title 70 O.S. § 5-149 states, “In addition to the four security drills required... all public schools shall conduct a minimum of six safety drills as follows: 1. Two fire drills per school year... 2. Two tornado drills per school year...”

The accreditation officers from the Oklahoma State Department of Education (SDE) review documentation related to these drills annually. Interviewees stated that all required drills were conducted and involved staff in the central office. Unlike other public schools, students are not typically present to participate in these drills.

OKCA has an emergency management plan. The plan includes emergency contacts and procedures dealing with natural and man-made disasters. Tornado, earthquake, and fire procedures are listed in the plan. Interviewees stated that the plan was communicated and understood by staff. This plan is on file with the Bartlesville Police Department.



Emergency evacuation routes are posted throughout the central office. Interviewees were familiar with the signage and routes. These routes are followed during evacuation drills. Exits are also clearly marked. The central office does not have a fire suppression/sprinkler system. However, the central office does have an alarm/security system.



Interviewees stated that student discipline was rarely an issue and that suspensions and expulsion are seldom necessary. Student expectations and discipline are discussed in the *Oklahoma Connections Academy School Handbook Supplement 2017-18*. This supplement to the general student handbook lists the behaviors that may result in disciplinary measures. These measures include warning, suspension, and expulsion. Virtual school suspension or expulsion means removing or limiting student access to the online curriculum, classroom, and communications. It may also include removal from sponsored activities. The due process procedures are also listed in the handbook supplement.

OKCA staff members are trained to recognize and report suspected child abuse and neglect. The *Employee Handbook* states, “All individuals participating in activities affiliated with us that include children are responsible for being alert to possible abuse or neglect. We provide training to employees who interact with children on Child Abuse and Neglect, which includes guidelines for identifying and procedures for reporting any suspected child abuse or neglect, and employees must comply with the procedures established in this training.”

**FINDING 4-1**

OKCA facilities were expanded to allow more staff to serve in central office. Beginning in 2015, the central office space was expanded from approximately 2,095 square feet to approximately 4,050 square feet. This expansion nearly doubled the size of the office space and allowed more staff to serve in the central office. Offices, common workspaces, and cubicles were included in the expansion. Interviewees stated that this expansion allowed for greater use of the space, more face-to-face collaboration, and increase in a sense of school comradery.

**COMMENDATION**

**The OKCA central office expansion provided many positive results for staff.**

**FINDING 4-2**

Fire extinguishers are located throughout the central office. The extinguishers were purchased new in 2015. Interviewees stated that the fire extinguishers were inspected, but these inspections were not documented on the extinguishers.



NFPA 10 - *Standard for Portable Fire Extinguishers*<sup>1</sup>, addresses the various inspections required of hand-held fire extinguishers. A visual inspection is required upon installation and then again every month. The monthly visual inspection should include:

- Extinguishers are in their designated places;
- There are no obstructions to access or visibility;
- Safety seals are not broken or missing;
- There is no evidence of physical damage, corrosion, leakage or clogged nozzle;
- Pressure gauge readings are in the proper range or position;
- Operating instructions are legible and facing outward; and
- Fullness is confirmed by weighing or lifting. (the heft test)

The yearly maintenance inspection requires a more thorough examination and is also required when extinguishers undergo hydrostatic testing. Maintenance is required to include a thorough examination of the mechanical parts, extinguishing agent and expelling means of each portable fire extinguisher and, therefore, must be performed by an approved extinguisher servicing company.

Finally, NFPA 10 recommends that, as a best practice, a permanent record be kept for each extinguisher that includes at least the following information:

- Date maintenance was last performed and by whom;
- Date the extinguisher was recharged and by whom;
- Date the six-year maintenance was last performed and by whom; and
- Date the extinguisher was hydrostatically tested and by whom.

## RECOMMENDATION

### **Task a position to make inspections of the fire extinguishers.**

OKCA administration should assign a current position with the task of making regular inspections of the fire extinguishers in the central office. If extinguishers need to be replaced, the OKCA administration should contact the central office space landlord. A sample fire extinguisher record is provided in **Exhibit 4-2** below.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/fpc/fireext2.pdf>



The OKCA administration should seek out funds to acquire an AED for the central office. Though not required by statute, an AED may save the life of OKCA staff or patrons. The Oklahoma State Department of Education has a list of possible funding available for AEDs<sup>2</sup>.

## FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation may be implemented with existing resources.

## FINDING 4-4

OKCA does not have an energy management program. Interviewees stated that staff members typically turn off lights and check for running water, but no formal program exists to monitor utilities and control costs. Though utility costs are part of the *Services Agreement*, an energy management program is a best practice and could potentially save money for OKCA.

General energy consumption can be one of the most expensive operational items of a school. Savings can be achieved by implementing an energy management program that reduces utility consumption. One of the most beneficial practices of energy management is the recording of monthly utility bills and the communication of use and costs to staff.

The Association of School Business Officials (ASBO), in their publication *Planning Guide for Maintaining School Facilities*<sup>3</sup> suggests that the following guidelines will help a school system accomplish more efficient energy management:

- Establish an energy policy with specific goals and objectives.
- Assign someone to be responsible for the district's energy management program and give this energy manager access to top-level administrators.
- Monitor each building's energy use.
- Conduct energy audits in all buildings to identify energy inefficient units.
- Institute performance contracting (i.e., contracts requiring desired results rather than simply a list of needed products) when replacing older, energy inefficient equipment.
- Reward employees of schools or buildings that decrease their energy use.
- Install energy efficient equipment including power factor correction units, electronic ballasts, high-efficiency lamps, set-back thermostats, and variable-speed drives for large motors and pumps.
- Install motion detectors that turn lights on when a room is occupied and off when the room is unoccupied.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.sca-aware.org/schools/funding-sources>

<sup>3</sup> <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2003/2003347.pdf>

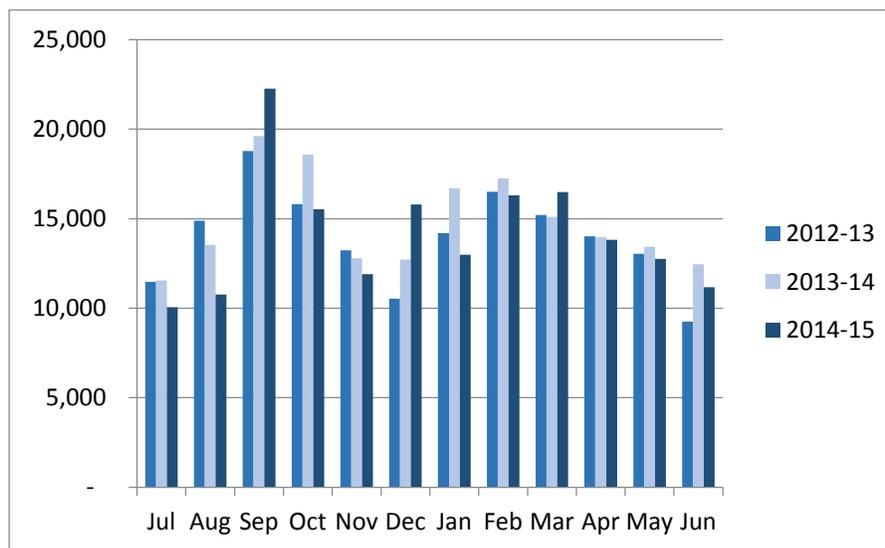
## RECOMMENDATION

### Develop an energy management program.

The OKCA administration should develop an energy management program to track and control utility costs. The administration should record and chart each monthly utility bill in an effort to detect billing errors, equipment malfunction, to lower energy use, and create a culture of conservation.

The running record and charting of monthly utility bills will provide management with a month-to-month comparison that should show seasonal “ebbs and flows” in the consumption of various types of energy. The recording and charting should go back at least one year (preferably three to five years) so as to allow for “same-time-previous-year” comparisons (**Exhibit 4-3**).

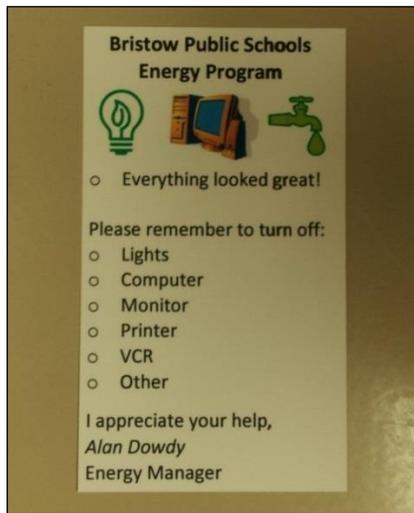
**Exhibit 4-3**  
**Sample - Electrical Consumption by Month**



Source: OEQA Review Archive

Taken one step further, as a best practice, administration could also leave energy conservation reminders or “Oops Slips” (**Exhibits 4-4a** and **4-4b**) whenever they discover that room lights, computer monitors or other electronic devices are left on by students or staff.

**Exhibit 4-4a**  
**Energy Saving Reminder Sticker from**  
**Bristow Public Schools**



Source: Bristow Public Schools, April 2012

**Exhibit 4-4b**  
**Generic Energy Saving**  
**Reminder Sticker**



Source: [www.awarenessideas.com](http://www.awarenessideas.com), April 2016

## FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources and may lead to cost savings.

### B. TESTING SITES

OKCA offers state assessments at various locations annually. Because OKCA students are located throughout the state, OKCA administration strives to host testing at strategic locations in Oklahoma. Typically, these sites are at libraries, career technology centers, and college campuses.

The *Services Agreement* states, “All Students shall be required to participate in the State of Oklahoma’s standardized tests to the same extent as students enrolled in any other Oklahoma public school. Connections shall be responsible for establishing a testing plan that provides reasonable access to testing sites based on the Student’s residence...”

The *Oklahoma Connections Academy School Handbook Supplement 2017-18* states, “All students in grades 3-8 will be required to take the Oklahoma Core Curriculum Test (OCCT). In addition, students will be required to take all relevant High School tests... More specific information about which tests will be administered and when will be posted by the principal once the school year is under way, including specific dates, required grades, and locations.”

Testing sites are not owned by OKCA or Connections, LLC. Sites are leased or rented for a specific time period. Thus, emergency lighting, fire extinguishers, AEDs, emergency escape routes, and custodial operations are the responsibility of the sites’ owners.

OKCA uses software to pinpoint where clusters of students are located. Once students are located, OKCA administration begins to search for nearby facilities. Facilities in Oklahoma City and Tulsa are always used as testing sites. The central office in Bartlesville is normally used as a testing site as well.

When determining testing sites, OKCA administration looks at the following factors:

- Location of students
- Availability of facility
- Size of space available
- Wi-Fi connectivity
- Availability of hotel for staff

A goal of OKCA is to have testing sites no farther than one to one and one-half hours away from students' homes. Interviewees stated that for the 2017-18 school year, testing sites are tentatively scheduled for Spiro, Bartlesville, Grove/Miami, Guymon, Woodward, Lawton, Clinton, Tulsa, and Oklahoma City. OKCA experience has shown that the location of the testing sites can impact student participation.

After testing sites are determined, OKCA staff members are assigned to the particular location based upon the grades tested and the types of tests administered. Interviewees stated that logistics are specifically planned as manpower and laptop computers must be in place for testing to be successful. Laptops are rented for one month to be available for three weeks of testing.

A specific test location coordinator is assigned to each testing site. The testing coordinators are responsible for ensuring that the proper testing materials are in place at each testing site. Testing sites are staffed by OKCA employees (technically Connections, LLC employees) who act as monitors.

Regarding test monitoring the *Employee Handbook* states, "...we occasionally ask teachers to participate in activities that may take place outside of normal office hours such as information/marketing sessions, weekend field trips, or administration of state testing." The handbook further states, "...employees must be available to conduct home visits, attend field trips and other school-related events, act as proctors for state testing, and perform other duties as assigned."

The testing coordinators and monitors are made of aware of the testing procedures prior to the testing session. Testing procedures are discussed with staff beginning in January of each year. Initially, staff meet every two weeks then, as the testing window approaches, they meet weekly to ensure that the testing sessions run smoothly.

For security purposes, the testing coordinators and monitors are present the entirety of the testing session. Each testing site has its own emergency plan. The testing coordinators and monitors practice the emergency management plan to prepare for possible situations. However, specific emergency drills with students are not carried out.

Parents check their children into the site, leave the testing location, and then return to pick up their children after testing is completed. Each site has a sign-in sheet, and parents are required to show picture identification. Students are not to leave with anyone but the parent unless other arrangements have previously been made.

**Exhibit 4-5** below shows the responses from 51 staff, 408 parents, and 419 students regarding their pertinent handbooks. The majority of respondents *agreed* that the student testing facilities are adequate. Some respondents had *no opinion* or *disagreed* with the survey statements.

#### **Exhibit 4-5 Survey Results Related to Testing Facilities**

Group	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Staff	The student testing facilities are adequate.	59%	35%	7%	0%	0%
Parents	The student testing facilities are adequate.	44%	35%	20%	1%	0%
Students	The student testing facilities are adequate.	28%	68%	NA	3%	<1%

*Source: OEQA – OKCA Survey Results (2017)*

#### **FINDING 4-5**

OKCA has an efficient and effective process for determining and staffing testing site locations. Interviewees stated that much planning and thought go into locating testing sites near students. Logistics are purposefully reviewed and strategies are developed to ensure that testing goes smoothly for parents, students, and staff. This process positively impacts student participation in state testing.

#### **COMMENDATION**

**OKCA has an efficient and effective process for determining and staffing testing sites.**

#### **FINDING 4-6**

OKCA does not ensure that each testing site has AEDs available. Testing sites are determined based on a number of factors, and emergency procedures and devices often fall to the facilities' owners. However, the availability of an AED may save the life of OKCA staff, students, or parents.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

**Ensure that AEDs are provided at each testing site.**

The OKCA administration and testing coordinators should determine if AEDs are available at each testing site. If one is not available OKCA administration should seek out funds to acquire portable AEDs for use at these testing sites. These AEDs could be stored and used annually if necessary, keeping in mind that pads and batteries may expire.

The Oklahoma State Department of Education has a list of possible funding available for AEDs<sup>4</sup>. Numerous brands and prices are available. An example of a portable AED is shown below.



### FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation may be implemented with existing resources.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.sca-aware.org/schools/funding-sources>



*Chapter 5:*  
*Support Services*

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## Chapter 5

# Technology

Oklahoma is striving to further implement technology into all classrooms. For example, the first goal of the 2004 Oklahoma Plan for Instructional Technology/Telecommunications was that all Oklahoma students would achieve technological literacy by the eighth grade.

The Foundation for Excellence in Education's Digital Learning Council introduced the *10 Elements of High Quality Digital Learning*<sup>1</sup> in the fall of 2010. These elements identify actions to be taken by lawmakers and policymakers to promote a high quality education for all students. The Digital Learning 2014 State Analysis compares Oklahoma with the national average on each of the elements (**Exhibit 5-1**).<sup>2</sup> Overall, Oklahoma earned a 77 percent or C+ on this report card. Oklahoma's areas of concern include:

- Student Eligibility – lack of requirements for online courses to earn a high school diploma;
- Personalized Learning – lack of students able to enroll in more than one online course provider simultaneously;
- Quality Choices – lack of multiple opportunities for virtual charter schools and online vendors to apply for initial approval, or approval for three or more years;
- Assessment and Accountability – non-use of evaluative outcomes-based student-performance data for virtual charter schools, online providers and online courses, and subsequent closure due to poor performance;
- Funding – lack of course completion funding payment to providers based upon student daily attendance, performance and competency; and
- Delivery – lack of state actions to ensure broadband access and effective data use.

However, Oklahoma scored high in providing student access to quality digital content.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.digitalllearningnow.com/10Elements/>

<sup>22</sup> This is the most recent data from this source; the same comparison has not been undertaken since 2014.

**Exhibit 5-1**  
**Digital Learning 2014 State Analysis: Oklahoma**

10 Elements of High Quality Digital Learning	Oklahoma Grade & Percentage		National Average Grade & Percentage	
	1. Student eligibility: All students are digital learners.	D+	67%	D-
2. Student access: All students have access to high-quality digital content and online courses.	A	100%	C	75%
3. Personalized learning: All students can customize their education using digital content through an approved provider.	C	75%	C+	77%
4. Advancement: Students progress based upon demonstrated competency.	B-	81%	F	59%
5. Quality content: Digital content, instructional materials, and online and blended learning courses are high quality.	A-	92%	A-	93%
6. Quality instruction: Digital instruction is high quality.	B-	82%	B-	84%
7. Quality choices: All students have access to multiple high-quality providers.	C+	79%	C-	74%
8. Assessment and accountability: Student learning is the metric for evaluating the quality of content and instruction.	F	58%	D+	68%
9. Funding: Funding creates incentives for performance, options, and innovation.	C	75%	F	54%
10. Delivery: Infrastructure: Infrastructure supports digital learning.	F	56%	D-	60%

Source: <http://www.digitallearningnow.com/report-card/state/2014/oklahoma-3/>

A 2015 study compared computer usage by 8<sup>th</sup> grade math students. For each type of work, Oklahoma overall scored lower than the United States overall (**Exhibit 5-2**).

**Exhibit 5-2**  
**Computer Usage Among 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Math Students, 2015**

	Percent of Students Using Computers at Least Once a Month for:					
	Practice or Review Math	Extend Math Learning	Play Math Games	Use Graphing Program	Research a Math Topic	Draw Geometric Shapes
Oklahoma	52%	42%	42%	16%	18%	10%
United States	61%	53%	47%	29%	26%	15%

Source: <https://www.edweek.org/ew/tc/2017/state-data-how-do-students-actually-use-computers.html>

As one of the schools operated by Connections Academy, a division of Connections Education, LLC, Oklahoma Connections Academy (OKCA) has an extensive support system for technology. Unlike a brick and mortar school that may only have one person troubleshooting technology issues, OKCA has the benefit of a nationwide support team, including tech support located in Oklahoma.

Because it is part of a larger, nationwide organization, disaster planning and backups are handled at the corporate level. The corporate office has disaster recovery and business continuity plans for its online learning platform, Connexus. The corporate office also has a comprehensive backup strategy that leverages multiple data centers and the shipping of backups to alternate locations.

OKCA provides an online learning environment that is supplemented with physical materials and offline activities. As noted in **Exhibit 5-3**, a majority of OKCA students believe that their school emphasizes the use of technology tools for class work and nearly all believe that their school has helped them develop their ability to use technology to gather and communicate information. A majority of parents and staff agree that OKCA provides an adequate technology environment (**Exhibit 5-4**). Finally, taking advantage of the opportunities presented by a virtual learning environment, the OKCA learning environment has both synchronous and asynchronous elements (**Exhibit 5-5**).

**Exhibit 5-3**  
**Student Survey Responses Regarding OKCA Technology Environment**

<b>How much does your school emphasize each of the following?</b>				
	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>Very Little</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>Very Much</b>
Using technology tools for class work	7%	15%	49%	29%
<b>How much has your experience at this school contributed to your development?</b>				
	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>Very Little</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>Very Much</b>
Using technology to gather and communicate information	3%	10%	41%	46%

*Source: OEQA Survey Results, 2017*

**Exhibit 5-4**  
**Parent and Staff Survey Responses Regarding OKCA Technology Environment**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Survey Questions</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>No Opinion</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
<b>Parents</b>	My child has up-to-date computers and other technology to use in learning.	59%	30%	7%	3%	1%
<b>Staff</b>	OKCA has adequate technology to support its operations.	72%	26%	2%	0%	0%

*Source: OEQA Survey Results, 2017*

**Exhibit 5-5**  
**OKCA Student and Staff Survey Responses Regarding E-Learning Formats Used**

<b>Which e-learning formats do most of your teacher(s) use and to what degree does he/she use them for instruction?</b>				
<b>Students</b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>Very Little</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>Very Much</b>
<b>Synchronous</b> (at a specific time each day)	8%	13%	40%	39%
<b>Asynchronous</b> (anytime during the day)	7%	22%	47%	24%
<b>Which e-learning formats do you use and to what degree do you use them?</b>				
<b>Staff</b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>Very Little</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>Very Much</b>
<b>Synchronous</b> (specific time each school day)	4%	0%	30%	66%
<b>Asynchronous</b> (anytime/any day)	8%	6%	34%	52%

*Source: OEQA Survey Results, 2017*

**FINDING 5-1**

OKCA has excellent support systems for students and teachers experiencing technical difficulties. Both students and teachers can call a toll-free number to begin the support process. For systems problems within the school, an Issue Aware (IA) ticket is created that can be viewed by all stakeholders in the problem. This same IA process is used for things like problems with the curriculum, so everyone is familiar with it.

The average time to close a technical support problem is 10 minutes. Technical support is available from 7:00 am to 9:00 pm (EST). Maintenance updates are generally handled in the overnight hours. As shown in **Exhibit 5-6**, when surveyed, staff largely agreed that OKCA has adequate technical support.

**Exhibit 5-6**  
**OKCA Staff Survey Responses Regarding Technical Support**

<b>Survey Question</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>No Opinion</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
OKCA has adequate technical/technological support for staff.	67%	24%	7%	2%	0%

*Source: OEQA Survey Results, 2017*

**COMMENDATION**

**OKCA has excellent support systems for students and teachers experiencing technical difficulties.**

**FINDING 5-2**

OKCA ensures its teachers are comfortable with teaching in a virtual environment. Prospective teachers are expected to be proficient in MS Word and PowerPoint, as well as to have good phone skills. New teachers receive training in the learning platform and other technologies prior to starting the school year. OKCA encourages new teachers to maintain at least part-time in-person hours at the OKCA office at the beginning of the year.

Technology training is available every year but there are company-wide professional development meetings held once a month via a live lesson. These monthly trainings are put on by the Connection Education, LLC professional development department and teachers from other states are in attendance. All professional development trainings are recorded so that they can be reviewed at other times.

As shown in **Exhibit 5-7**, nearly all OKCA staff *strongly agree* or *agree* that they receive adequate job training and that they know how to use technology in their jobs. Nearly all also *strongly agree* or *agree* that teachers participate in online or in-person professional learning communities and that new teachers receive support in acclimating to the online environment.

**Exhibit 5-7**  
**OKCA Staff Survey Responses Regarding Technology Professional Development**

Survey Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I receive adequate training overall to perform my job functions.	78%	20%	2%	0%	0%
I understand how to use technology as it relates to my job functions.	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%
Teachers participate in professional learning communities that meet online or in person.	83%	15%	2%	0%	0%
In OKCA, new staff members receive mentoring/peer coaching to acclimate to the online environment.	83%	17%	0%	0%	0%

*Source: OEQA Survey Results, 2017*

**COMMENDATION**

**OKCA ensures its teachers are comfortable with teaching in a virtual environment.**

**FINDING 5-3**

The district leverages its high-technology environment to support extensive communications between all stakeholders. Administrators and teachers attend a variety of regular meetings to foster communication and learning up and down the organization. Teachers have the opportunity

to participate in training sessions with teachers from all over the county. Teachers' work can be monitored in various ways; every teacher is observed regularly. Teachers are expected to communicate with students regularly.

**Exhibit 5-8** provides the staff survey responses to questions regarding communications. As shown, nearly all staff *strongly agree* or *agree* that various communication methods are regularly used throughout the OKCA organization.

**Exhibit 5-8**  
**OKCA Staff Survey Responses Regarding Technology Professional Development**

Survey Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The central office is accessible and effectively communicates with staff.	80%	17%	2%	0%	0%
My Principal is accessible and effectively communicates with staff.	65%	28%	7%	0%	0%
OKCA staff and administrators often use email or other social media to communicate with one another.	87%	11%	2%	0%	0%
Teachers provide students with specific and timely feedback about their learning	61%	30%	7%	2%	0%

*Source: OEQA Survey Results, 2017*

Communications between teachers and administrators is regular and consistent. Teachers noted in the focus groups that they have access to communicate with mentor teachers and each other in a variety of areas. Teachers also have "Touch Base" meetings with the principal every other week and receive observations during their live lessons. Principals report observing teachers' live lessons and providing feedback much more often than they would be doing in a brick and mortar school environment.

One particular feature of the OKCA culture that is only possible because of the high-tech environment is the use of weekly challenges with staff groups. Administrators issue weekly challenges that, if met, are rewarded with prizes. Sample challenges include:

- for Teachers:
  - Assignments needing to be graded - less than 100 with nothing older than 8 days.
  - Curriculum Based Assessments (CBA) on track. For example, Social Studies teachers were responsible for doing a CBA for students with last names beginning with H-N; this keeps the same students from all getting called in the same month by every teacher.

- for Engagement Specialists and Title I staff: document meeting with a minimum of 80 percent of their students with scheduled appointments each week.
- for Counselors: depends on what they are working on. During the month of November, they were working on doing credit checks on all juniors so OKCA asked that 25 percent be completed each week.
- for special education teachers: 80 percent or more of needed contacts be made and all paperwork is accurate in Ed Plan.

In focus groups and interviews, the challenges were not viewed as negative or burdensome. They were seen as challenging, but also relevant to the work of the staff. The ability to create and monitor these challenges is rooted in the school's strongly data-driven culture, enabled by technology and the technological literacy of all staff.

OKCA has several expectations regarding communications between teachers/staff and students. Teachers are expected to make a welcome phone call to every student within seven days of enrollment. Elementary teachers are also required to send out a weekly webmail for their classroom. The engagement specialists send out a combined weekly webmail for the secondary students. All OKCA staff are required to track their individual interactions with students and the compilation of these activities is regularly reviewed by the school administrators. As a result of these expectations, in the focus groups, teachers reported that they know more about their students than they did in a brick and mortar school because they are able to provide greater one-on-one attention to students.

The OKCA website is well-organized and includes a number of informational items that the websites of brick and mortar schools also typically include: board meeting schedules and agendas, profiles of district teachers, and mandatory disclosures. It also includes a section to highlight major news items (**Exhibit 5-9**).

**Exhibit 5-9**  
**News Section of OKCA Website**

## Oklahoma Connections Academy News

- December 20, 2017 – OKCA teacher Lori Eads and student Valerie Lakey demonstrate easy activities to keep learning alive over winter break on [KTUL](#)
- December 20, 2017 – OKCA teacher Laura Brown and student Nikhita Pan Jnani discuss online school and demonstrate activities to help prevent learning loss over winter break on [KOKH](#)
- October 1, 2017 – OKCA graduate Anthony Barrington is settling into life at Juilliard! The accomplished trumpet player discusses his journey to the music school and how online learning helped him achieve his goals. Learn more in the [Metro Family](#) (Pages 42-43)
- September 19, 2017 – OKCA families meet face-to-face during a back-to-school picnic! Hear from teacher Melissa Patrick and students on [KTUL Online](#)
- August 22, 2017 – OKCA students begin the school year. Learn more in the [Skiatook Journal](#)

Source: <https://www.connectionsacademy.com/oklahoma-virtual-school/about/newsroom>

At the time of this review, the OKCA website was averaging 2,129 visitors. In 2016, the website had 47,566 visitors.

A report by Civic Enterprises, *Raising Their Voices: Engaging Students, Teachers, and Parents to Help End the High School Dropout Epidemic* (Bridgeland, Balfanz, Moore & Friant, 2010)<sup>3</sup>, points to the importance of communication in achieving student success. The report emphasized using technology capabilities to provide access to information for parents, students, and school personnel. It is important for schools to communicate with parents not only to address a problem, but also to share positive aspects of the school experience was highlighted.

<sup>3</sup> Bridgeland, J. M., Balfanz, R., Moore, L. A., & Friant, R. S. (2010). *Raising their voices: engaging students, teachers, and parents to help end the high school dropout epidemic* (PDF file). Washington, DC: Civic Enterprises. Retrieved from [http://www.civicerprises.net/MediaLibrary/Docs/raising\\_their\\_voices.pdf](http://www.civicerprises.net/MediaLibrary/Docs/raising_their_voices.pdf)

## COMMENDATION

**The district leverages its high-technology environment to support extensive communications between all stakeholders.**

### FINDING 5-4

Although there are various methods for OKCA to communicate with students and their parents/learning coaches, some complained in the survey that the flow of communication is too great or contains extraneous information. Some also complained that teachers do not respond to emails timely. OKCA staff generally agreed that the flow of emails from the corporate Connections Academy office can be high.

While the OKCA Facebook page has regular updates, most appear to be from the corporate Connections Academy office and not specific to OKCA. As such, many of the corporate emails and Facebook posts are not directly relevant to OKCA student/parent needs. OKCA also surveys parents annually; however, the survey does not gauge the effectiveness of various communication methods.

Likewise, OKCA also has an active website, but it is not used primarily as a communication device with current students and parents. Instead, much of its content is focused on prospective students. It includes substantial content that provides an overview of the school, curriculum, and student successes, generally geared for students and families who are unfamiliar with OKCA. As such, it serves as a marketing piece rather than internal communication mechanism.

Teachers are encouraged to respond to questions and concerns from parents right away, in whatever form it is received (phone call, email, instant message) even if only to say they received their communication and are working on the issue. Teachers are also encouraged to call parents and students. During focus groups and interviews, teachers and administrators noted that they spend a substantial portion of their work day on the phone, communicating with students and families.

Within the Connexus learning platform, OKCA has a more personalized method of communicating to just their students. One of the three main links on the main Connexus page that students and parents see upon logging in is the Announcements link (**Exhibit 5-10**).

### Exhibit 5-9 Sample Announcements Page Within Connexus

The screenshot shows a user interface for an online learning platform. At the top, there are navigation tabs: 'Today Wed, December 20', 'My Courses', 'Links', and 'Announcements' (which is selected). Below the navigation, there are two main announcement columns. The left column, under 'National Announcements', features a 'Weekly Quiz Bowl Challenge' with text about winners and a 'Pumpkin Patch Fun!' announcement with a photo of a child. The right column, under 'MyCA Announcements', also features a 'Pumpkin Patch Fun!' announcement with a photo of a child. On the right side of the page, there are sections for 'My Teachers' (Jen Teacher) and 'Courses' (Sign Language I A & 7 more).

Source: OKCA, 2017

Published in the School Community Journal by Susan Graham-Clay, *Communicating with Parents: Strategies for Teachers* (2005), explores the need for one-way and two-way communication methods.<sup>4</sup> It highlights that figuring out the best form of communication is crucial. One-way communication doesn't require a response. It could be a newsletter or an announcement made on social media. Two-way communication, such as emails and phone calls, requires answers or input. While both are necessary when communicating with students and parents, it is important to know when to use one or the other.

## RECOMMENDATION

**Survey students and parents annually to assess the success of communication methods and to identify areas in need of improvement.**

The OKCA has the resources to communicate broadly and often, and appears to make every attempt to do so. However, this effort has resulted in "information overload" for at least some segment of its student body and learning coaches. The OKCA Head of School should convene a small group of learning coaches and high school students to gather feedback on when and how the use of communication tools may be causing confusion and/or frustration. This may result in ideas for how teachers can either reduce the appearance of duplicative communications or may result in a streamlining of the overall communications processes, perhaps including recommendations to the corporate office for managing its communication flows to families. There are numerous free survey resources and since OKCA is already using Google apps, they could consider Google Forms to create, distribute, and analyze a survey assessing the success of communication methods. At a minimum, implementing this recommendation should result in an

<sup>4</sup> Graham-Clay, Susan. School Community Journal; Lincoln Vol. 15, Iss. 1, (Spring 2005): 117-129. *Communicating with Parents: Strategies for Teachers*. Retrieved from: <http://www.adi.org/journal/ss05/Graham-Clay.pdf>

easy-to-follow infographic for students and learning coaches that diagrams where to go to access various types of information and updates.

## FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

## FINDING 5-5

Although the state requirement for students to travel to a physical location for state-required testing is burdensome, OKCA handles it well. Using rented technology, they exceed the state's requirement as to number of sites and have a goal of locating a site within an hour of every student (with some exceptions in the Panhandle region).

OKCA leaders have determined attendance is higher when the test is closer to a student's home. Therefore each year, using a pin map, test locations are decided anew. OKCA uses locations in regional career technology centers and colleges because they have robust WI-FI and those spaces can accommodate larger groups of students.

As shown in **Exhibit 5-10**, students, parents, and teachers mainly *strongly agree* or *agree* that testing facilities are adequate. Parents were also surveyed on whether or not they felt OKCA provided students with a safe environment in which to take state assessments and 81 percent either *strongly agreed* or *agreed*.

### **Exhibit 5-10** **Student, Parent, and Staff Survey Responses Regarding Adequacy of Testing Facilities**

Group	Survey Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Students	The student testing facilities are adequate	28%	68%	0%	3%	1%
Parents		43%	36%	21%	0%	0%
Staff		59%	35%	7%	0%	0%

*Source: OEQA Survey Results, 2017*

## COMMENDATION

**Although the state requirement for students to travel to a physical location for state-required testing is burdensome, OKCA handles it well.**

## FINDING 5-6

OKCA provides an extensive tool kit for teachers and principals to analyze students' progress and learning. Teachers and principals expressed confidence in using these tools to track students and then use the data to fine tune learning experiences for each student.

In interviews and focus groups, teachers and administrators praised the data tools available to track student progress and to ensure teachers were keeping track of students. **Exhibit 5-11** provides the staff survey results regarding data analytics and tools used to support student

learning in the OKCA. As shown, nearly all staff *agree or strongly agree* that there is a systemic process for collecting and using student data, that teachers use data to monitor and adjust instruction, that staff is trained in the use of data, that data are used to monitor student success, and that leaders monitor data.

**Exhibit 5-11**  
**OKCA Staff Survey Results Regarding Data Analytics and Tools**

Survey Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
OKCA has a systemic process for collecting, analyzing, and using student data.	78%	20%	2%	0%	0%
Teachers monitor and adjust curriculum, instruction, and assessment based on data from student assessments.	65%	28%	4%	2%	0%
OKCA ensures that staff members are trained in the evaluation, interpretation, and use of data.	78%	17%	4%	0%	0%
OKCA uses data to monitor student readiness and success for the next level.	76%	20%	4%	0%	0%
OKCA leaders monitor data related to district continuous improvement goals.	76%	22%	2%	0%	0%

*Source: OEQA Survey Results, 2017*

**Exhibit 5-12** provides a sample of an Assessment Objective Performance Report for one student. It provides the teacher with information on how a student did on assessed items for each objective in a course. Teachers have access to similar screens for the LEAP assessments in math and reading that students take three times a year.

### Exhibit 5-12 Sample Student Assessment Objective Performance Screen

Objective Name	Score	Progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Display Taken/Assigned
 3-5_SEP3-1. Plan and conduct an investigation collaboratively to produce data to serve as the basis for evidence, using fair tests in which variables are controlled and the number of trials considered.	 100%	 1/1	
 3-5_SEP3-2. Evaluate appropriate methods and/or tools for collecting data.	 100%	 3/3	
 3-5_SEP3-3. Make observations and/or measurements to produce data to serve as the basis for evidence for an explanation of a phenomenon or test a design solution.	 100%	 2/2	
 3-5_SEP3-4. Make predictions about what would happen if a variable changes.	 100%	 2/3	
 3-5_SEP8-3. Combine information in written text with that contained in corresponding tables, diagrams, and/or charts to support the engagement in other scientific and/or engineering practices.	 100%	 14/14	
 3-5_SEP8-5. Communicate scientific and/or technical information orally and/or in written formats, including various forms of media as well as tables, diagrams, and charts.	 100%	 2/2	

The student gradebook allows teachers (and students) to review each assessment taken, the score and lesson completion status for each course. They can then drill down on each assessment for further details (**Exhibit 5-13**).

### Exhibit 5-13 Sample Student Gradebook and Drill Down Screens

Grade Book Details							
Section Summary: <i>Click a section name to view details.</i>							
Section	Score	Grade	Lesson Completion	Teacher	Objectives	Tools	
<a href="#">3-Imagine Math</a>	--		12/80 (15%)	Walters, Sara			
<a href="#">Art 3</a>	100%	Pass	9/22 (41%)	Walters, Sara			
<a href="#">Educational Technology and Online Learning 3</a>	100%	Pass	22/48 (46%)	Walters, Sara			
<a href="#">Language Arts 3 A</a>	91%	A	68/82 (83%)	Walters, Sara			
<a href="#">LEAP Grade 3</a>	--		1/3 (33%)	Walters, Sara			
<a href="#">Math 3 A</a>	93%	A	54/62 (87%)	Ryan, Shelly; Walters, Sara			
<a href="#">Oklahoma State History 3</a>	98%	A	11/26 (42%)	Walters, Sara			
<a href="#">Physical Education 3</a>	100%	Pass	15/30 (50%)	Walters, Sara			
<a href="#">Science 3 A</a>	97%	A	39/45 (87%)	Walters, Sara	21 objectives		
<a href="#">Skills for Success Grade 3</a>	89%	Pass	10/34 (29%)	Walters, Sara			
<a href="#">Social Studies 3 A</a>	94%	A	34/43 (79%)	Walters, Sara			
<b>Overall</b>	<b>96%</b>		<b>275/475 (58%)</b>				

Drop	Unit	Lesson	Name	Type	Requires	Earned	Possible	Score	Value	Weight	
<input type="checkbox"/>			Imagine Math- November	Quiz		6	8	75%	<input type="text" value="8"/>	9%	
<input type="checkbox"/>			Imagine Math- October	Quiz		4	8	50%	<input type="text" value="8"/>	9%	
<input type="checkbox"/>			Imagine Math- September	Quiz		8	8	100%	<input type="text" value="8"/>	9%	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	1	Quick Check	Quick Check		0	8	0%	8		
<input type="checkbox"/>	2	1	Multiplication as Repeated Addition	Quick Check		3	4	75%	4		
<input type="checkbox"/>	2	2	Multiplication on the Number Line	Quick Check		4	4	100%	4		
<input type="checkbox"/>	2	3	Arrays and Multiplication	Quick Check		4	4	100%	4		
<input type="checkbox"/>	2	4	Quiz Practice	Practice		6	6	100%	6		
<input type="checkbox"/>	2	4	The Commutative Property Quiz	Quiz		7	7	100%	<input type="text" value="7"/>	8%	
<input type="checkbox"/>	2	5	Division as Sharing	Quick Check		4	4	100%	4		
<input type="checkbox"/>	2	6	Division as Repeated Subtraction	Quick Check		3	3	100%	3		
<input type="checkbox"/>	2	7	Reflection	Reflection		5	5	100%	5		
<input type="checkbox"/>	2	7	Unit Practice	Practice		7	7	100%	7		
<input type="checkbox"/>	2	8	Whole Number Multiplication and Division Unit Test	Test		14	15	93%	<input type="text" value="15"/> *18	10%	
<input type="checkbox"/>	3	1	2 and 5 as Factors	Quick Check		3	3	100%	3		
<input type="checkbox"/>	3	2	9 as a Factor	Quick Check		4	4	100%	4		
<input type="checkbox"/>	3	3	Apply Properties: Multiply by 0 and 1 Quiz	Quiz		7	7	100%	<input type="text" value="7"/>	8%	
<input type="checkbox"/>	3	3	Quiz Practice	Practice		6	6	100%	6		
<input type="checkbox"/>	3	3	Time to Talk Session: Unit 3	Participation		3	3	100%	<input type="text" value="3"/>	14%	

Teachers also make regular use of an accountability report. It provides data on each student including:

- when they enrolled;
- when they last logged in;
- when they last completed a lesson;
- when the teacher last spoke to them;
- when the student last attended a Live Lesson;
- whether the student is on track;
- metrics on attendance, participation, and performance; and
- indications as to whether the student is likely to be successful on various state tests.

School administrators report using these tools as well as completing substantial data analysis using spreadsheets. They report they regularly drill down to the individual student-level to assess progress, identify problems, and work toward solutions.

## COMMENDATION

**OKCA provides an extensive tool kit for teachers and principals to analyze students' progress and learning.**

### FINDING 5-7

OKCA uses technology to support a new initiative in engaging its students. Two engagement specialists work with identified students to help them re-engage and stay engaged in school.

OKCA identifies students who are not sufficiently engaged in school or who need additional supports during its PLC meeting. The number of students fluctuates throughout the year. Students are put on a plan which they work through with their engagement specialist and then, once they are on track, a plan is no longer needed. It provides a personalized approach to determine where there is a disconnect. In one case, the engagement specialist worked with a student who wanted to complete her diploma but was at risk of aging out, on top of being a parent herself. The engagement specialist provided the support and accountability to help the student stay on track to reach her goals.

The engagement specialists use OKCA's Issue Aware system to keep all information on a particular student in one place and to keep all of the student's teachers informed. Students are expected to book regular appointments with the engagement specialist using Book Me, which is an online tool. The engagement specialists meet with identified students either in an online classroom or over the phone. Meetings can take place weekly or less frequently if the student is progressing well.

According to OKCA staff, the creation of the engagement specialist role is unique to Oklahoma and was developed in Oklahoma. As the role is explicitly not one of counselor, the only rough equivalent to a position in a traditional school district would be a combination of a social worker and graduation coach, depending on the age and needs of the student.

## COMMENDATION

**OKCA uses technology to support a new initiative in engaging its students.**

### FINDING 5-8

OKCA makes a plethora of resources available to regular and special education students. Students are directed to many resources on the internet by their teachers. Teachers have the option to provide additional resources to support student learning, as needed, and reported making use of a wide variety of tools beyond the Connexus platform and curriculum.

In the focus groups and in interviews, administrators and teachers gave examples of external online content to which they might direct students for additional learning opportunities. This willingness to use online resources from a variety of sources allows teachers to customize learning experiences for each student. Some of the resources teachers mentioned using in their classes included:

- Google Docs;
- Google Sheets;
- EdPlan;
- Success Maker;
- Reading Plus;
- Getty images;
- Imagine Math;
- Ilike2learn (geography);
- Junior Scholastic websites;
- Khan Academy;
- BrainPOP;
- Compass;
- Raz-kids (reading); and
- Cough Drop (communication device for students who do not speak).

Special education students are provided with technology to accommodate their disability, such as text-to-speech and touch screens. The special education teachers utilize the same tools in their classroom that regular education teachers use and share live lesson rooms. During interviews, it was expressed that, because of the technology tools they have available, regular and special education teachers communicate more than they do in a brick and mortar school.

## COMMENDATION

**OKCA makes a plethora of resources available to regular and special education students.**

## FINDING 5-9

OKCA does not provide any students with a computer, not even those who qualify for free- or reduced-price meals. Families that are already enrolled in OKCA who face special circumstances, such as loss due to a tornado, can get loaner equipment from the school. In all other situations, families are expected to provide the equipment.

Teachers reported that in some cases families with multiple students in OKCA have students alternate days for school, as they have only one computer in the household. Other teachers mentioned that inadequate internet bandwidth is an ongoing concern for some students. Teachers also reported that some students have inadequate equipment, above and beyond less than adequate internet bandwidth. On the survey, students themselves complained about the quality of the headsets provided by OKCA.

The Office of Educational Technology, in their report *Reimagining the Role of Technology in Education: 2017 National Education Technology Plan Update*, warns against a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) or Bring Your Own Tech (BYOT) policy. Their reasoning includes economic disparity, instructional burden, and privacy and security as factors that complicate a BYOD or BYOT approach.<sup>5</sup>

## RECOMMENDATION

**Provide families with an explicit list of recommended computer technology prior to enrollment and develop a policy to loan an adequate laptop to students who qualify for free- or reduced-price meals. As part of this, OKCA may want to offer an upgraded headset option for purchase.**

While the OKCA website does have a list of requirements for hardware and connectivity, there is not a detailed list. For example, OKCA provides some of their clients with HP laptops and desktops because they meet the necessary requirements to successfully connect and run programs students will be accessing. Providing families with explicit recommendations helps ensure they provide the right equipment for their students.

## FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

<sup>5</sup> <https://tech.ed.gov/files/2017/01/NETP17.pdf>

**FINDING 5-10**

Despite it being widely available in public school districts, OKCA students do not currently have access to free MS Office products. According to OKCA staff, the only reason it has not been made available is because OKCA students do not have traditional school emails (e.g., ending with a recognizable school district or education address). Connections Academy would be the provider of suitable email addresses for OKCA students, but they do not, at this time, offer that service.

The lack of access has resulted in students using a wide variety of tools for simple word processing and spreadsheet tasks, making the job of teachers more difficult. Teachers are expected to be able to use MS Word and PowerPoint but they must also be familiar with the myriad of programs their students are using if they do not have MS Office. In a focus group, teachers reported frustration with time spent addressing issues around this.

As noted in the Office of Educational Technology's *Reimagining the Role of Technology in Education: 2017 National Education Technology Plan Update*, instructional burdens can be created by how technology is used. Without program consistency, teachers and students can run into compatibility issues or teachers can end up spending time coaching a student through the use of a non-standard program in order to submit work.

**RECOMMENDATION****Prioritize working with Microsoft to obtain educational licensing and free MS Office tools for students.**

Requiring students to utilize MS Office ensures consistency when they are working with word processing and spreadsheet tasks. Currently, in order to download MS Office for free, students need a traditional student email. If this can be addressed directly, providing OKCA students access to MS Office downloadable tools is preferable.

MS Office is also available as an online tool for free. However, because of potential internet reliability problems, requiring students to utilize MS Office solely via internet can create gaps of time when students are unable to complete work.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

**FINDING 5-11**

All OKCA teachers are provided with the technology tools needed to be successful. All teachers receive a laptop and a second monitor. They can then choose either a writing tablet or a document camera. Teachers who live near the OKCA office can avail themselves of additional office technology as they need to, including printers, copiers, and fax machines.

Teachers in focus groups reported that they regularly use all of the equipment provided to them and spoke highly of their document cameras, in particular. When asked what additional

technology they would like to have, most of the comments were related to items that it would be “nice to have” rather than “really need.”

### **COMMENDATION**

**All OKCA teachers are provided with the technology tools needed to be successful.**



*Appendix A:*  
**Staff Survey Results**



# Staff Survey

Surveys Completed: 51

Totals may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

## Statistical Data

<b>1. How long have you been employed by Oklahoma Connections Academy (OKCA)?</b>					
1 year or less					<b>27%</b>
2-3 years					<b>29%</b>
4 – 5 years					<b>31%</b>
6 years or more					<b>12%</b>
<b>2. What is your role in OKCA?</b>					
District Administrator					2%
Principal					4%
Classroom Teacher					61%
Special Ed Teacher					22%
Other Certified (e.g., Librarian, Guidance Counselor)					10%
Family Support					0%
Central Office					2%
<b>3. Do you teach/lead as a faculty person who is:</b>					
Full-time at OKCA?					98%
Adjunct/part-time at OKCA?					0%
Adjunct/part-time at OKCA and another educational institution?					0%
Adjunct at this institution but employed full-time at another institution?					2%
<b>4. Which (if not all) e-learning formats do you use and to what degree do you use them instructions?</b>					
Format	Not at all	Very little	Some	Very much	Total Respondents
<b>Face-to-Face</b>	37%	45%	18%	0%	49
<b>Synchronous</b> (specific time each school day)	4%	0%	30%	66%	50
<b>Asynchronous</b> (anytime/any day)	8%	6%	34%	52%	50

**Survey Questions**

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	OKCA's mission statement is clearly focused on student success.	89%	9%	2%	0%	0%
6	OKCA's mission statement is formally reviewed and revised with involvement from stakeholders.	78%	15%	7%	0%	0%
7	OKCA has a continuous improvement process based on data, goals, actions, and measures for growth.	83%	13%	4%	0%	0%
8	OKCA's administrators and district board complies with all policies, procedures, laws, and regulations.	83%	15%	2%	0%	0%
9	I understand the OKCA's organizational structure.	72%	24%	4%	0%	0%
10	I know to whom I report for all my job functions.	91%	7%	2%	0%	0%
11	I understand my contract with OKCA as it relates to my salary schedule and benefits or justification for paying performance stipends (if applicable).	87%	11%	2%	0%	0%
12	I receive adequate training overall to perform my job functions.	78%	20%	2%	0%	0%
13	OKCA's administrators expect staff members to hold all students to high academic standards.	80%	15%	4%	0%	0%
14	OKCA's leaders hold themselves accountable for student learning.	83%	15%	2%	0%	0%

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
15	OKCA's leaders hold all staff members accountable for student learning.	82%	16%	2%	0%	0%
16	I received adequate training on the teacher/leader evaluation instrument OKCA has adopted.	67%	24%	7%	2%	0%
17	OKCA's principals regularly evaluate staff members on the adopted evaluation criteria designed to improve teaching and learning.	80%	17%	2%	0%	0%
18	OKCA gives student needs a high priority when making decisions.	82%	16%	2%	0%	0%
19	The central office is accessible and effectively communicates with district staff.	80%	17%	2%	0%	0%
20	My Principal is accessible and effectively communicates with staff.	65%	28%	7%	0%	0%
21	Staff input is sought and validated by school leadership.	62%	33%	0%	2%	2%
22	Staff effectively communicates with parents.	74%	26%	0%	0%	0%
23	My Principal is an effective instructional leader.	73%	22%	4%	0%	0%
24	The staff handbook is easily understood.	67%	24%	9%	0%	0%
25	Teachers have scope and sequence documents that determine what is taught at each grade level.	67%	22%	9%	2%	0%
26	Teachers understand the Oklahoma Academic Standards/objects, test blueprints, and Item Specifications that are provided by the State Department of Education.	63%	33%	4%	0%	0%

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
27	Teachers monitor and adjust curriculum, instruction, and assessment based on data from student assessments.	65%	28%	4%	2%	0%
28	Teachers develop and implement instructional strategies and interventions to address the individual learning needs of students.	67%	30%	2%	0%	0%
29	Teachers consistently use instructional strategies that require self-reflection and development of critical thinking skills.	63%	33%	4%	0%	0%
30	Teachers use a process to clearly inform students of their learning expectations and standards of performance.	69%	29%	2%	0%	0%
31	Teachers provide students with specific and timely feedback about their learning.	61%	30%	7%	2%	0%
32	Teachers use multiple types of assessments to modify instruction and to revise the curriculum.	54%	37%	9%	0%	0%
33	Teachers participate in professional learning communities that meet online or in person.	83%	15%	2%	0%	0%
34	Teachers in OKCA have been trained in the professional learning communities (PLC) process that promotes discussion about student learning.	80%	17%	2%	0%	0%
35	In OKCA, new staff members receive mentoring/peer coaching to acclimate to the online environment.	83%	17%	0%	0%	0%
36	In OKCA, all staff members participate in continuous professional learning based on identified needs of the students and teachers.	76%	22%	0%	0%	2%

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
37	In OKCA, the professional development program is designed to increase effectiveness among all professional staff members.	69%	29%	2%	0%	0%
38	In OKCA, all stakeholders are informed of policies, processes, and procedures related to grading and reporting.	70%	28%	2%	0%	0%
39	OKCA provides highly qualified staff members to support student learning.	83%	15%	2%	0%	0%
40	In OKCA, related learning support services (Special Ed, ELL, etc.) are provided for all students based on their needs.	82%	16%	2%	0%	0%
41	OKCA's financial condition is transparent and understood.	35%	30%	30%	0%	4%
42	OKCA stakeholders are invited to provide input into the budgetary process.	26%	22%	43%	4%	4%
43	OKCA actively applies for competitive state /federal grants and other grant opportunities.	24%	24%	46%	4%	2%
44	OKCA provides high quality student support services (e.g., counseling, educational and career planning).	71%	29%	10%	0%	0%
45	OKCA has a systematic process for collecting, analyzing, and using student data.	78%	20%	2%	0%	0%
46	OKCA ensures that staff members are trained in the evaluation, interpretation, and use of data.	78%	17%	4%	0%	0%
47	OKCA uses data to monitor student readiness and success for the next level.	76%	20%	4%	0%	0%
48	OKCA leaders monitor data related to district continuous improvement goals.	76%	22%	2%	0%	0%

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
49	Teachers adequately prepare students for state mandated assessments (OCCT, EOI).	61%	37%	2%	0%	0%
50	The student testing facilities are adequate.	59%	35%	7%	0%	0%
51	Students are adequately being prepared for college, if they choose that path.	67%	28%	4%	0%	0%
52	Students receive timely information on college entrance requirements and scholarship offers.	67%	24%	9%	0%	0%
53	Students receive adequate vocational training to prepare them for the workforce, if they choose that path.	67%	24%	9%	0%	0%
54	OKCA has adequate technical/technological support for staff.	67%	24%	7%	2%	0%
55	An accurate inventory of hardware and materials is kept by the school.	43%	33%	24%	0%	0%
56	I understand how to use technology as it relates to my job functions.	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%
57	The OKCA website is a useful tool for staff, parents, and students.	67%	30%	0%	2%	0%
58	OKCA staff and administrators often use email or other social media to communicate with one another.	87%	11%	2%	0%	0%
59	OKCA has adequate technology to support its operations.	72%	26%	2%	0%	0%

**WRITTEN RESPONSES**

*What do you like best about your OKCA?*

# Responses

1. Flexible schedule



2. All of the above!
3. We provide a quality education option for students who are not successful in a traditional setting for a wide variety of reasons.
4. The flexibility of my schedule. If a student needs a little more time in a LL, I can provide that.

***What do you like least about your OKCA? What one suggestion would you give to make it better?***

**# Responses**

1. I dislike the focus on #s to determine an employee's worth. Sts 1st period
2. Teachers are often required to do things outside of their scope of work
3. Increased in person staff meetings
4. Somehow relating to elementary families the amount of involvement needed from the parent/LC/CT.
5. My salary at OKCA is 13% less than other teachers earn in my field and at my experience level in this area of the state. There is not an easy answer to this issue, but it is problematic.
6. The volume of work is sometimes difficult. Additional funding, in order to have more staff/teachers, is needed.
7. The amount of time it requires to complete everything we do.
8. IAs in my email...I wish there was a way to filter the amount that we receive.
9. The curriculum can be difficult to deal with at times.
10. If the systems used for documentation would work together. This would make contact logging, and information retaining much easier.
11. I cannot honestly think of one right now.
12. I do not feel that the evaluation system is set up to reward great teachers. It is structured to encourage mediocrity. We have been told that we cannot get a 4 unless we do something company changing. What I do changes lives, way more important that changing a company. That's why I chose to be a teacher. If I am told every single year I can never get a 4 no matter how good I am at my job and being a 3 is just so so, why in the world would I want to work twice as hard with no acknowledgement or bonus opportunity. Eventually I just give up and am happy with so so.
13. I would like to see Live Lesson rooms have more options lesson presentations and student participation.
14. At this time it would be amazing to have a few more teachers.
15. The enrollment date stays open way too long. It needs to be cut off sooner.
16. Teachers spend way too much time in meeting when there are other things (teaching, dealing with students.....) that we could be doing. A great amount of our time is wasted.
17. I don't have any! This is the best job! I absolutely love my job and what we do for these families.
18. Nothing. I love working at OKCA it is the best teaching job I have ever had! PS
19. Provide more advanced notice and information about teacher participation in field trips.
20. The need for more teachers is always great in the middle of the year- to be able to hire more teachers and not be so spread thin would be awesome.
21. The school is growing quickly and the student numbers are very high per teachers. More teachers for each subject would lower the teacher-to-student ratio and allow teachers more time to work with each individual student.



*Appendix B:*  
**Parent Survey Results**



# Parent Survey

Surveys Completed: 408  
Totals may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

## Statistical Data

<b>This survey is about my child's Virtual Charter District</b>	
<b>1. My child is enrolled in the following level:</b>	<b>Responses</b>
K-3 <sup>rd</sup> grades	13%
4-5 <sup>th</sup> grades	7%
6 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup> grades	33%
9 <sup>th</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup> grades	18%
11 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> grades	29%
<b>2. How long has your child attended Oklahoma Connections Academy (OKCA)?</b>	<b>Responses</b>
1-2 years	74%
3-4 years	19%
More than 4 years	7%
<b>3. Has your child attended any of the following schools before enrolling in OKCA?</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Private School	11%
Charter School (brick and mortar)	3%
Public School within your neighborhood/community	85%
Other Virtual Charter School	10%
Homeschool	15%
<b>4. Which reason(s) below best describe why you chose to enroll your child in OKCA?</b>	<b>Responses</b>
a. I believe my child was not receiving adequate protection (e.g. bullying) in previous school	34%
b. I believe my child was not succeeding academically in his/her previous school	32%
c. My child needs the flexibility for his/her schedule (e.g. due to traveling, health issues, sports)	40%
d. This school is my child's last resort (he/she was expelled/suspended from previous school)	1%
e. My child progressed from being homeschooled in the lower grades and will require subject area expertise I cannot provide in the higher grades	6%
f. My child is an accelerated learner and this allows them to progress at a faster pace	10%
*g. Other (please specify)	22%

*\*See Comments for option g at the end of this survey*

**Survey Questions**

	<b>Survey Questions</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>No Opinion</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
5	OKCA's mission statement is clearly focused on student success.	65%	31%	3%	>1%	1%
6	OKCA has established goals and a plan for improving student learning.	62%	33%	4%	1%	>1%
7	Parental input is sought and validated by the school.	60%	34%	5%	1%	>1%
8	The student testing facilities are adequate.	44%	35%	20%	1%	0%
9	The student handbook is easily understood.	58%	37%	5%	0%	0%
10	OKCA's financial condition is transparent and understood.	46%	36%	16%	2%	0%
11	OKCA effectively communicates with parents.	63%	31%	4%	1%	1%
12	My child's teachers/OKCA provide a curriculum that meets his/her learning needs.	55%	37%	5%	3%	0%
13	My child's teachers give work that challenges my child.	62%	33%	5%	1%	0%
14	My child's teachers use a variety of teaching strategies and learning activities.	53%	37%	8%	1%	>1%
15	My child's teachers meet his/her learning needs by individualizing instruction.	49%	35%	12%	4%	>1%
16	OKCA works as a team to help my child learn.	57%	34%	7%	1%	0%
17	My child's teachers help me to understand my child's progress.	53%	35%	9%	3%	0%
18	My child's teachers keep me informed regularly of my child's academic progress.	53%	33%	11%	3%	>1%
19	My child knows the expectations for learning in all subjects.	57%	36%	6%	2%	0%

	<b>Survey Questions</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>No Opinion</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
20	My child's teachers report on my child's progress in easy to understand language.	58%	34%	7%	1%	>1%
21	My child sees a relationship between what is being taught and his/her everyday life.	41%	41%	15%	3%	>1%
22	My child is given multiple assessments to measure his/her understanding of what was taught.	59%	33%	7%	1%	0%
23	My child has up-to-date computers and other technology to use in learning.	60%	30%	7%	2%	1%
24	My child has access to support services based on his/her identified needs.	47%	29%	23%	1%	0%
25	OKCA provides qualified staff members to support student learning.	57%	37%	5%	1%	>1%
26	OKCA provides a safe environment when taking state assessments.	53%	29%	18%	0%	0%
27	OKCA provides students with access to a variety of informational resources to support their learning.	60%	33%	6%	1%	0%
28	OKCA provides excellent student support services (e.g., counseling, and /or career planning).	49%	33%	16%	2%	0%
29	OKCA provides opportunities for students to participate in activities that interest them.	49%	40%	10%	1%	0%
30	OKCA ensures equity and the effective use of financial resources.	44%	33%	22%	1%	0%
31	My child is prepared for the next grade level in the next school year.	48%	36%	14%	2%	1%

## Open Response Questions

27. What do you like best about OKCA?	
Flexibility	87%
Pace	45%
Access	46%
The teachers and staff	53%
The curriculum	42%
It is a safe environment	52%
Other (See Responses Below)	7%

### Responses

1. Professionalism of staff
2. My ability to correct misinformation and elaborate and personalize the learning
3. I am able to track my son's progress & ensure homework is tuned in. That was not possible at his previous schools despite computer programs in place b/c not all of his teachers utilized them or were willing to do so even upon repeated request.
4. Diversity of course selection and availability
5. Absolutely love OKCA!!
6. It is impossible to select just one; rather, it is the entire package that OKCA offers that we like best.
7. Technology utilization in alignment to educational needs.
8. we absolutely love everything about OCA. will be starting our other kid next year. learning coach discussions through the lessons are great. has improved our daughters attitude toward learning.
9. Teachers
10. They teach him considering the learning disabilities he has.
11. everything
12. everything
13. As a parent, It has been very rewarding to ensure my daughter's safety from an endangered environment she encountered while attending a public school. Also, it is just as rewarding for my child to receive the education she needs, without the pressure of peers, or teaching staff inflicting opposing opinions different from home. I am greatly appreciative of safety and I am greatly appreciative of OKCA for this educational program.
14. I can keep my child safe at home and I don't have to worry about her missing the bus, getting left behind by the bus.
15. All the above, its the best education tool for students, oca is best tool of education. It requires a lot of work, for students and parents but okca could meet education needs of every household in Oklahoma, I like the format, time flexibility
16. She has more time to learn the material fully because of the flexibility. I think the live lessons are very important in a virtual school.
17. I love being involved with my child's education and their learning process.
18. The curriculum seems to follow public school curriculum, which is fine.
19. Holds their interest in learning.
20. All the above
21. All
22. I get to see exactly what the lessons are about and how my child is challenged to learn.

23. The curriculum can be expounded upon &/or corrected when needed to ensure a broader understanding of subjects & their applications to real life.
24. I like that my child may explore a topic or subject she is particularly interested in instead of having to keep pace with the teachers plans.
25. I like having the ability to see all the materials and assignments. Along with access to the results.
26. Special interest clubs

<b>28. What do you like least about OKCA?</b>	
Nothing. I am happy with OKCA	70%
Lack of social interaction.	15%
Teachers/staff	2%
Technology issues	7%
Other (See Responses Below)	13%

### Responses

1. Not all students use Windows operating systems. My student uses a MAC. In one particular class, Ed-Tech, he is required to use Windows for his assignments. I personally think this particular class should be more flexible with different operating systems used per student.
2. My children would like the opportunity to play soccer in highschool like their friends but that is not offered for them.
3. My daughter states that live learning is boring and she doesn't learn anything.
4. Errors in curriculum and the way Portfolios are assigned.
5. Core Curriculum
6. PE teacher since beginning of the year has not responded in a timely manner to questions. This continues to this very day. My son has good grades in all of his classes but PE, in which he has a D for reasons we cannot determine despite repeated e-mails to the teacher and phone calls to the Asst. Principal, who reports that the teacher has not responded to her e-mails either.
7. Curriculum
8. Errors in curriculum and the way Portfolios are assigned.
9. Lack of help for struggling students
10. My child's own motivation :)
11. Specific related IEP issue where a teacher likely does not understand the problem
12. Live Lessons and Time to Talk should be added like an assignment. This makes it easier for the student to click and attend without trying to search on how to do it.
13. Too much email to keep up with
14. lack of consistency between classes/teachers
15. would love to have mywi internet as ours is limited and we cannot get unlimited in our area.
16. Curriculum in math is way harder than expected/than it should be in all grades.
17. I wish there was more intentional contact between my child's teacher and my child (from the Teacher's end), when the teacher notices grades slipping. Currently, the child's teacher doesn't address low performance concerns of my child on her own. I (the LC) have to always initiate contact and ask questions of the teacher for suggestions on different courses of action to assist my child in learning the course objectives and performing at a higher level.
18. time per lesson is inaccurate most lessons take more than 1 hour even though stated as one hour
19. lack of field trips and social gatherings in our area.
20. "busy work" such as with some portfolios. Too many!

21. can not adjust lessons for learning disabilities
22. the amount of work
23. The transfer process wasn't normal to public school. Also, Amanda Dickinson is an adjunct teacher and is penalizing my students grade for when she was still in her Public School. All attempts to wait for a response from her have been exhausted and she needs to be removed.
24. Teachers make assignments but don't give enough details about what they expect such as essay length or how detailed student needs to be in answers.
25. Poor, poor math and language curriculum for 1st and 3rd grades
26. My child can't be loaned a laptop computer just because we live in Oklahoma.
27. That Oklahoma doesn't provide laptops or an internet subsidy like Ohio does.
28. I didn't mark teachers/staff because it does not pertain to all teachers, but there are definitely some that do not answer emails or when they do they do not have an answer to the question(s)
29. being flooded with daily email
30. Lack of face to face tutoring
31. The grade school lessons are too long and some are even too difficult for even me to help teach.
32. L.A. Curriculum, but I'm told that's the standard
33. I would like for there to be more consistent live lessons. I do like the fact that they offer daily live office hours.
34. how much work is given on a daily basis
35. The educational technology course needs a more child friendly keyboard training
36. Sports coordination is not available with local schools
37. not being able participate in sports
38. Portfolios. I feel there isn't enough time to complete them without getting behind in other subjects. Also more detailed instructions on them
39. well I haven't learned everything that I need to learn to help my 3 children
40. The new curriculum
41. Most of the social activities are an hour or more away from where we live. I would like to see more activities in our area. It seems as though the social activities revolve around students in a particular area that is not our area. Also, there is only one teacher for a particular subject that my child has, and this teacher is not the most engaged with the children because that teacher also teaches a higher grade. That teacher is not very personable with my child.
42. The portfolio assignments seem to be too much and not enough time to do them without putting you behind in other subjects.
43. Curriculum contains many errors & scenarios explained as in a classroom setting that has no validity to our situation.
44. th work is too much for my special needs child she is always stressed about doing the amount of work needed to pass
45. Counseling for college isn't great
46. Son needs a iep and they came his adhd doesnt qualify him
47. complexity of the lessons make the classes take more than time allotted.
48. Live Lessons make my child nervous

<b>28. What suggestion would like to offer to improve OKCA?</b>	
Nothing. I am happy with OKCA	81%
Other (See Responses Below)	19%

**Responses**

1. To state clearly what is it is exactly needed for any portfolio.
2. A learning facility
3. Work with other local schools to offer the children the ability to play high school level sports.
4. Wish there were more social opportunities.

5. I think that their should be better understanding with parents, teachers and my child. They say she needs to call and check in but when she sends emails and calls she never gets a response. I know others that tried to tell us that before we even signed up with connections academy and we tried to see it for ourselves and it is true.
6. I am Happy with OKCA but more Social interactions would be great... Even just Get together at a park in different areas of the state... more places on same day so Everyone can participate.
7. Some teachers can be hard to contact
8. I would like to see a list of portfolios given for each subject at the beginning of the quarter with examples of each!
9. Investigate other learning methods besides CORE. Improve social/club options/activities.
10. I would like a little more consistency with how the teachers work. Some teachers offer more, like sending emails when there are live lessons and placing the live lessons in the planner. I wish all teachers did this. Some parents have to work and can't always be home to remind the kids to go to the live lessons. Also, less complex portfolios. Some of these portfolios will take all day long to complete. Sometimes they take a couple of family members helping the student out to complete them due to being so difficult and lengthy.
11. Reprimand or replace the PE teacher for her substandard performance.
12. Maybe a list given to the parents with portfolio assignments for each 9 weeks and instructions for those with examples. Sometimes I am completely lost as to what is expected because it was discussed in earlier lessons and my child has forgotten or not done certain parts.
13. We'd like it if the teachers reached out more. A struggling student had to reach out to them and half the time they aren't at their office hours and they cancel their live lessons. A struggling student wants the teacher to show an interest in their success.
14. Our school is the best you could not ask for better teachers choosing Connections Academy has literally made our lives better I recommend it to every parent that will listen
15. More social events for rural residences.
16. Live lesson and Time to talk added like an assignment.
17. Consider giving students/parents/learning coaches the opportunity to evaluate the faculty. Even something as simple as the "Stop, Start, Continue" assessment would be valuable for the teachers, I trust. Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback. Keep up the great work!
18. It would be helpful if Teachers sent an email to the Parent when child's not making very good grades in order to try and come to a conclusion on it. Also, if the child types a little slower cause this is his first year on a compute, if the Teacher would be a little more patient and not just think they are being ignored when he's clearly typing.
19. Program to help student families purchase, rent or borrow computers
20. More fun field trips for kids to meet up!
21. More learning activities & less workload.
22. Too many emails
23. to offer myfi to students that dont have internet access or that dont have eniugh internet
24. I wish the message boards were set up more efficiently. for instance, when my son takes a math test, I would prefer the learning coach answer sheet be on my page when I'm logged on instead of in a message board, which is very difficult to find. It seems like each teacher would have their own message board set up the students could easily access under the teacher information. The school and staff are excellent and I have no complaints about them.
25. Ease up on teaching 6th - 8th grade algebra and geometry. They just learned fractions last year.
26. I wish there was more intentional contact between my child's teacher and my child (from the teacher's end), when the teacher notices grades slipping. Currently, the child's teacher doesn't address low performance concerns of my child on her own. I (the LC) have to always initiate contact and ask questions of the teacher for suggestions on different courses of action to assist my child in learning the course objectives and performing at a higher level. I also wish the school provided technology for the students to use, rather than requiring the student's family to purchase and maintain technology (Laptop, printer, etc) for use in the virtual classroom.
27. making field trips more accessible for students not in the OKC region
28. Offer laptops to those students that are in need of them.
29. More live lessons. Smaller teacher to student ratio
30. Actual GPA or overall grade on front page (without zeros)
31. Need social interaction so kids can make friends

32. teachers have the ability to adjust lessons for learning disabilities
33. more social activities
34. teachers would respond faster, grade work in a couple days
35. Don't hire teachers that can't communicate, this is an online school, communication is key!
36. Significantly improve math and language curriculum. For Pete's sake.
37. need to schedule activities where kids can actually meet and become friends
38. That you get a grant or some other source of money to provide children in Oklahoma that needs laptop computers. Some families in Oklahoma don't have the money to buy a laptop computer a laptop
39. Try to raise money for computers.
40. Far advanced material for 2nd grade.
41. Make teachers more accountable for contacting the student when the student reaches out.
42. none at the moment
43. Add ability for free tutoring face-to-face for math
44. Make sure the lessons are not so hard that other parents like me can understand an help teach our grade school children.
45. Ability to take electives, despite other grades
46. Good job, would like students in their community to be recognized in high school graduation ceremonies, perhaps like my daughter always wanted to graduate with her friends at mustang, so is there a education deligation that can work to integrate that process with public schools, connexion academy needs to be seen ,as a viable resource education to families, and schools to educate students that learn better through OKCA. I think it could be further utilized for alduts wanting to go back and get their high school diploma. OKCA is a vital and monumental resource to public education. Which i believe stretches into college education curriculum as well.
47. I would like for there to be more reconginition or credit for students who attend live lessons and participate in the discussion. My daughter actively participates, engages, and answers questions in live lessons. They should give extra credit to students who do that. I also think it might be helpful for the students to be required to do a live presentation perhaps once or twice in the semester so they could get experience speaking in front of a group. As technology improves, more seminar discussions (perhaps by skype?) would be great. However, I think the benefits of this school far outweigh the drawbacks.
48. I wish they had more field trips closer to our town.
49. less work for smaller grades
50. Use a more kid friendly typing tutor or offer links to them, I found a good one that keeps my sons attention and it is free
51. Sports. We won't drive to Tulsa for activities in Bartlesville.
52. easier way of communication with teachers
53. Portfolios in each class a little more spread out, and not so many in the same week.
54. More in-person events
55. Portfolios in each class a little more spread out, and not so many in the same week.
56. Listen to the parents about the curriculum
57. Color coded assessment feedback to expedite and clarify the area of feedback.
58. Help with ideas on improving reading skills in my child
59. Schedule more activities in all of the geographical areas that the school supports not just areas that are convenient for the teachers (ie. Tulsa area, Broken Arrow area). There was only one activity (the Meet/Greet Picnic) at the beginning of the year in the Tulsa area. Also, it would be nice to have field trips/activities/social functions that the student's family do NOT have to pay for. There should be financing available for field trips just like there are in the local public schools since this is just a virtual public school.
60. Only 3 questions on a quick check can set up a child to feel like they are failing when they get 1 wrong.
61. Update/correct curriculum, ensure qualified teachers are hired, improve lesson engagement for students (much redundancy & little out of the box thinking opportunities). Core curriculum needs complete overhaul in general for all schools.
62. For the most part, the teachers are fantastic but there are a few that really need to be checked out better. They really don't know what they are doing and if your child excels in school they aren't given a "high five" for that, they only focus on the kids that don't want to do the work.
63. More adaptation to a Sprcial Ed teens needs
64. Listen more

65. Being able to join sports or band or choir or a elective of that nature
66. The classes not be so complex.
67. The ONLY thing that would make things nicer is if Oklahoma offered the use of computers like other states do. In Oklahoma we are required to provide our own and a school supplied access venue would be wonderful.
68. To be able to access academic discounts eg microsoft and laptop discounts
69. Teacher recordings of subjects other than Language Arts and Math
70. The student/teacher ratio could be a little less

**\*Responses from Question #4 option g:**

**# Other (please specify)**

1. my child has bowl problems which leads to other kids including some teachers in public schools
2. I feel that I as a parent can provide more direct motivation for my child to learn from home, as well, he receives direct assistance when needed.
3. violence in schools
4. My was not challenged enough in regular public school and they did not offer allt he materials for sucess due to their financial status.
5. My child was not being challenged at regular public school and was not offered all materials needed for his success.
6. My was not challenged enough in regular public school and they did not offer allt he materials for sucess due to their financial status.
7. The public school system here is failing to prepare our HS youth academically for college.
8. my child did have a medical issue which finally brought us to OCA but it was a combination of that and her neighborhood public school was not a good situation for my child because of the teachers!
9. Due to changes in our home life, I felt my child and myself needed accountability from teachers
10. Bullying was getting out of hand
11. There are multiple academic and social inadequacies in the public school system, stemming from misguided motives concerning financial gain as well as the lack of interest in the individual. I don't want my child to "fit in" to inappropriate and/or antiquated ideas.
12. My daughter was having anxiety going to regular school.
13. ADHD caused class disruption issues;
14. I think it is beneficial for the student
15. Due to changes in our home life, I felt my child and myself needed accountability from teachers
16. we moved and my child had anxiety about new school
17. The public educational system was sub-par and rife with political strife. It failed to provide an adequate academic environment.
18. Military family who moves a lot
19. girl drama and tired of dealing with it
20. My chid public school was segregating him due to his disability.
21. My chid public school was segregating him due to his disability.
22. this enabled me to get a true guage of his education in our public school and help him catch up on areas of concern
23. Our child needed a better "fit" for his particular learning style and general disposition.  
I believe my child was not receiving adequate protection (e.g. bullying) in previous school believe my child was not succeeding academically in his/her previous school my child needs the flexibility for his/her schedule (e.g. due to traveling, health issues, sports) this school is my child's last resort (he/she was expelled/suspended from previous school) my child progressed from being homeschooled in the lower grades and will require subject area expertise I cannot provide in the higher grades my child is an accelerated learner and this allows them to progress at a faster pace
24. The class sizes were overwhelming my child. He felt like the teacher had no time to help him because there were too any students.
25. Her choice.
26. tryiing out a new home school

27. I want more involvement in my son's education and less negative influence from school. Public schools do not have enough funding to care for my child as an individual.
28. My child is on the spectrum and wasn't being dealt with properly in the public school.
29. no transportation provided
30. Brick and Mortar not needed for education
31. we wanted to give her a better opportunity to learn. Too much focus on state testing, a lot of other distractions.
32. We felt the flexibility this school offered would benefit our child.
33. We like it our child can move at her own pace
34. A lot of anxiety and kids bullying.
35. not enough attention from teachers in a regular school, student was falling behind, too many distractions in a regular school
36. My child has a separation disorder also which caused him not to want to go to public school.
37. My child needs motivation that was not provided by the previous school
38. Large school size was overwhelming
39. He wanted to try it.
40. Wanted more control of my child's curriculum
41. Home situation was interfering with school
42. My daughter was very unhappy at her school. She had few friends and felt like an outcast
43. Flexibility and record keeping
44. Record keeping and the ability to remain flexible.
45. they do better
46. Problems with going to public school and being around a big group of people
47. My child was not being taught the material necessary for him to succeed.
48. my child has some learning disabilities due to her conditions- Anxiety, ADHD, Separation Anxiety and there is less pressure on her for her school work-example she can work at her own pace.
49. My child got waitlisted at her previous charter school
50. The public school in our area is full of gang members and drug dealers and I didn't want my child around that environment.
51. I wanted to be involved in my daughter's school all the way not when the teacher set up meetings.
52. My child experienced an extreme amount of anxiety at school and her ability to learn became an issue.
53. My daughter was losing confidence in herself at public school, she needed a place to grow through education experience, connections academy turned out to be the best source of education, she has become a better student through connections Academy
54. Our beliefs are different from tps and we can monitor more closely what our children are being taught!
55. my child has asperger's syndrome and was not being treated well. He was bullied daily, and his IEP was never followed. He became physically ill from the stress and that was enough to make the change. Wish we had done it years ago.
56. wanted them more ready for college
57. not satisfied with teacher or the way principal handled situations
58. She felt she wasn't getting a good education and that public school was too social based.
59. I felt this school was better academically
60. My child is dyslexic
61. desire to be more involved in child's education
62. public school denied transfer
63. she is special needs.
64. I do not feel that my children were being taught adequately in the regular public school 11/9/2017 3:23 PM
65. Parents traveled frequently for work, no caretakers locally to stay in public school.
66. My child was extremely unhappy with public school
67. i want to try something different
68. Because of budget cuts, my child was not receiving an adequate education.
69. I wanted to know more and have a better understanding of my child's learning; so we decided to try OKCA.
70. He has SPD. Sensory processing disorder.
71. Need flexibility for her learning disability which her other school was not providing
72. Personal attitudes of the students, parents, teachers & especially administration focus too much on arbitrary &/or oppressive, outdated ideas, as well as the socializing being in ways I feel are improper for the

development of the true self. And academic material is questionably necessary/appropriate for the best interest of humans rather than the system being funded & the current social standards our governing systems wish to continue for it'S own interests.

73. I like the more one on one communication I have with my child.
74. bullying in schools
75. Bullying was starting to become both an issue and a distraction in the social scheme of things
76. bed bugs in public school
77. My sons first grade teacher actually told me that she, 'had no idea how to teach [my] child.' That was when we left the brick and mortar school
78. My child started having seizures, and was more in the High I.Q. - Low E.Q. category
79. The teacher at our former brick and mortar school spent more time on her cell phone than providing instruction, therefore my child had several pages of homework every night.
80. We were no longer able to homeschool and OKCA provided the next best choice, with excellent academics and exceptional teacher involvement.
81. public School's failing grades. My kid's need a better education. This gives me the ability to make sure they get what they need.
82. public School's failing grades. My kid's need a better education. This gives me the ability to make sure they get what they need.
83. My son was dealing with a death in the family and depression. The online school allows more flexibility of his schedule.
84. We had some behavioral issues that are local school could not handle
85. Don't like schools around me
86. My child had trouble concentrating in large classrooms with a lot of noise
87. public School's failing grades. My kid's need a better education. This gives me the ability to make sure they get what they need.
88. my older children have been going here
89. My husband & I wanted to be much more involved in our child's education. We also ran into issues with the Public School in our community for example, our daughter was waiting on others to "catch up" to where she was in reading meaning she was stalled instead of being challenged to move forward as well as field trips out of town, parents were not allowed to attend. This was a perfect option for us to become MUCH more involved and the individualized learning environment allows our daughter to progress much more naturally..
90. My child was told to "go kill yourself" repetitively. The administration did nothing. The administration put him in school isolation with drug dealers and users. He was only trying to keep a water bottle to flip so he put hand sanitizer in it so it would look foamy so no one would drink it. They assigned hem 45 day which put him in from Oct to middle Jan. Teachers were supposed to visit him. Only one or 2 did a few times. He did not learn much. They decided to let him out right before Semester finals so he could try to cram everything in before taking the finals. He did pass the semester and the rest of the year. It left him an outcast for the rest of the year.
91. My child was getting into the wrong crowds at school.



*Appendix C:*  
**Student Survey Results**



# Student Survey

Surveys Completed: 419

Totals may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

## Statistical Data

<b>1. What is your current grade?</b>	
6 <sup>th</sup> grade	15%
7th grade	9%
8th grade	17%
9th grade	20%
10th grade	15%
11th grade	13%
12th grade	12%
<b>2. How long have you attended Oklahoma Connections Academy (OCA)?</b>	
1-2 years	80%
3-4 years	14%
More than 5 years	7%
<b>3. How much time do you spend each day attending virtual classes and/or completing assignments?</b>	
1-3 hours per day	17%
4-6 hours per day	59%
More than 6 hours per day	24%
*Other (See Comments at the end of this Survey)	312 responses

## Survey

### Questions - Set A

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Overall, I feel good about being in OKCA.	41%	52%	5%	2%
Teachers engage me in virtual classroom discussions.	28%	62%	8%	1%
I am encouraged to be creative in classroom assignments and projects.	33%	59%	6%	2%
Learning experiences in OKCA are similar to learning experiences in traditional schools.	15%	38%	33%	14%
I have opportunities to engage with other students at OKCA.	24%	60%	11%	5%
The rules and policies of OKCA are fair.	45%	53%	1%	>1%

The student handbook is easily understood.	40%	55%	4%	>1%
The student testing facilities are adequate.	28%	68%	3%	>1%

### Survey Questions - Set B

<b>Which e-learning formats do most of your teacher(s) use and to what degree does he/she use them for instruction?</b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>Very Little</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>Very Much</b>
Face-to-Face	39%	25%	30%	7%
Synchronous (at a specific time each day)	8%	14%	41%	38%
Asynchronous (anytime during the day)	7%	23%	47%	23%
<b>How much do each of the following activities and assignments interest or engage you?</b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>Very Little</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>Very Much</b>
Teacher lectures (through video or other technological means)	8%	18%	52%	22%
Discussions and debates (online interactive formats such as google hangouts)	7%	20%	45%	29%
Individual/independent readings	7%	16%	36%	40%
Writing projects	12%	14%	48%	26%
Research projects	9%	24%	40%	27%
Group projects through online technology.	19%	31%	33%	17%
Giving presentations and speeches (e.g., Skype, webinar, etc.).	38%	27%	23%	12%
Art, drama activities, and role plays	23%	20%	35%	22%
Projects and lessons involving personal device apps or other technology sources.	11%	24%	43%	23%
Memorizing facts and figures for courses	1%	12%	51%	35%
Analyzing ideas during class or for assignments	1%	6%	50%	43%
<b>How much does your school emphasize each of the following?</b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>Very Little</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>Very Much</b>
Spending time preparing for standardized tests	1%	9%	43%	47%
Participating in school events and activities (athletics, plays, academic competitions)	15%	21%	43%	21%
Using technology tools (e.g., Google apps for education, virtual field trips, etc.) for class work.	7%	15%	48%	30%
Furthering education or training beyond high school	6%	14%	45%	35%

<b>How much has your experience at this school contributed to your development in the following areas?</b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>Very Little</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>Very Much</b>
Acquiring skills for a job after completing high school.	7%	16%	44%	32%
<b>How much has your experience at this school contributed to your development in the following areas? (cont.)</b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>Very Little</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>Very Much</b>
Writing effectively	2%	11%	45%	41%
Thinking critically (reasoning, asking “Why”)	4%	12%	43%	42%
Developing creative ideas and solutions	4%	12%	42%	42%
Reading and understanding challenging materials	4%	10%	42%	45%
Using technology to gather and communicate information.	3%	10%	41%	46%
Working well with others to complete a task or project.	15%	23%	41%	21%
Developing career goals	6%	14%	46%	34%
Treating people with respect.	4%	6%	28%	62%
<b>Effort in Courses</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>Most</b>	<b>All</b>
About how many of your classes challenge you to your full academic potential?	2%	22%	48%	29%
In about how many classes do you give your maximum effort?	2%	15%	43%	40%
In about how many classes do you put forth very little effort?	55%	34%	8%	3%

<b>What suggestions would you like to offer to improve OKCA?</b>	
None. I am happy with OKCA	77%
Other (See Responses Below)	23%

### # Responses

1. math
2. Give us websites to study on
3. less port follyos and after school tuter's
4. Having more times where students get together. Having more field trips
5. i happy just didnt like saying my daughter was a cheater
6. If someone is caught ahead, they shouldn't still have to 30 hours a week. Because they are ahead.
7. I think the portfolios and the discussions are a waste of time and kinda use less.
8. I wish it was easier to find the live lessons.
9. Math and ed tech are too hard. Need to space out portfolios in every class. Sometimes I have 5 due right at a holiday and thats not fair.

10. more hands on labs in science
11. More one on one time with the teacher.
12. better communication
13. Too many portfolios
14. The teachers to answer or get back to you ASAP
15. Field trips closer to Hooker Oklahoma.
16. I would like there to be more field trips in my area.
17. I think that there should be less portfolios, and in the discussion boards make where you do not have to reply to other people.
18. upgrade the learning videos
19. Better explanations for harder or modified lessons.
20. i just get confused when it comes to links.
21. A test every Friday.
22. Too not make us to have to much Work
23. First you need to have times were the kids need a brake. Maybe from 12am to 2am.second of all you need a time format to switch classes, 5th grade Ms Green, languge, science, and edgucational technoligy and lurning.5th Ms ryan,math,art,and social studys.
24. The curriculum should have more focus on critical thinking and problem-solving, and less focus on memorization.
25. Be more helpful to students who are already busy. Because that's why I do OKCA is because my parents are too busy to do home schooling themselves, and I'm also very busy to even do school. But don't get me wrong I still want a good education but I just need more flexibility
26. Could we get textbooks instead of reading our lessons on a computer screen?
27. i use the what little internet i have every day, and most young adults my age do aswell, we don't particularly need to be treated like children when it comes to internet safety. i have never once attended a chat with a grad live lesson. i already know what i'm going to be since i was little and many young adults do aswell i feel the whole thing is pointless.
28. I wish I could skip certain lessons to move on, and after a set amount of days the lesson becomes un-skipable.
29. Make it easier to meet people; Add a better variety of curriculum, especially in IT since we're on an online school.
30. Be allowed to do sports like cheer or football in our own hometowns.
31. The headphones. They do work but man the cords just coil and curl then the quality of them goes down and you can't use them again and again. I gave up on my pair last year.
32. Checking in more with the teacher on how they grade. I've had two incidents with the same teacher who nearly failed me in their class when I had done the work correctly.
33. This school just isn't for me.
34. See your assignments a for the next few days for you need to get ahead.
35. I'd rather there was more communication with other students if the feild trips are far away. It makes you feel isolated.
36. offer different field trips
37. Just get a bit updated. You use quite a bit of obsolete programs and the headphones you send annually won't work with any modern computer; they have two plug-ins. The last time I used something that had two differently-colored jacks was when I had an 18 inch box TV from the late '90s/early 2000s.
38. Less tabs! I don't like having 20-30 tabs open for school. That Eats up my RAM and make my computer run hotter.
39. Delete algebra from high school in general, don't pile so much work on one person, make classes about stuff you will need, I don't need to know when the sphinx was made to make it in life.
40. more video lessons and teachers involved
41. No Skills for Success, it gets in the way.
42. I wish there was some sort of bridge to gap athletic fields other than reading about health online or filling out a exercise sheet. Like actual school sports.
43. less portfolios
44. I would have to say, working with someone one - on - one to help with college if they want to go.
45. instead of reading so much a button where it will rea the stuff to you

46. Have more meet ups with other students so that we can get to know each other better. and field trips should be free or less expensive
47. Move field trips around a bit. I don't live anywhere near Oklahoma City. If things were closer sometimes i could probably meet some friends..
48. A chat with another student where you talk face to face
49. It would be nice if they updated the looks and the response of the website. It would be better to if they could be more attentive in the live lessons because they usually answer the same person over and over. And for the live lesson room and discussion the format is slow and seems outdated for this time, so it would be nice for a nicer and clean format that has a nice response time.
50. Not using Grolier online, it is not secure and does not function well. I suggest removing it from all students curriculum.
51. well i think there should be more thngs to go on in talsa not that i think there shouldnt be in anywhere else but i think there should be more everywhere a chance to see our teachers more and i think there could be a live lessons that kids my age can go there
52. Stop making people go to LiveLessons please
53. more interaction
54. help
55. Have more of the teachers reach out to students. Some of my teachers have not contacted me at all unless I contact them first. And a couple of them don't answer webmails unless a week+ later.
56. I would like to see that they create a campus so that students can work face to face with students and if thats not possible then they should make study groups for students.
57. yesterday i was doing a lesson and only 3 of those questions were in any of my lessons
58. The best suggestion I have, is to schedule for more tutoring schedules and make sure the teachers are doing what they are supposed to.
59. Please let me out. I don't want to be here.
60. It is really difficult to do test after test
61. my internet for connections does not work all the time
62. Some of the teachers are pretty hard to deal with, such as taking weeks to reply to a webmail or to a call. Or not being as descriptive as they should be over a large assignment
63. The alarm systems are not always helpful, since you can be ahead of lessons or finished early and still be in alarm for not completing lessons (even though I am working on college classes outside of HS work)
64. interacting with students or classmates more
65. some people on Livelesson are very rude if you dont understand as much as them so for the teachers to look more.

What do you like best about your school?	
Flexibility	79%
Teachers	53%
Other (See Responses Below)	13%

**Responses**

1. the poeple
2. Everything
3. Way of teaching.
4. You can get ahead in schoolwork
5. its fun .
6. I don't have to be around people I don't know
7. Art, math, and science.
8. Being able to do my work whenever
9. if you need help you can actually ask a teacher and they will help you understand things a little clearer/better than before! :)
10. I relly like the teachers because there so nice and kind and at my old school my teachers had me set up and 6th graders beat me up I was in 4th at the time.

11. I like the fact that I don't have to wake up at 6AM in the morning to get on a bus and then spend half of my day at a public school.
12. No BS so to speak, right to the point and it makes it a little easier to get work done
13. it supports my 504, i don't feel like physical school is a smart idea, every hour you switch classes for six mounths at a time, you cant contact teachers whenever you need help, and around midday everone at ounce gets up to feed on crappy food, for 30 mins! you have to ask to use the restroom? the whole physical school is a dumb idea i personally my favorite.
14. I can be with my family and help my mom and dad who are both sick.
15. None.
16. I can complete work ahead of time.
17. its organized
18. nothing
19. The teachers are nice, flexibility is very little.
20. everything
21. I like how I still be able do what I have to do during the day and still have time to get the work done.
22. I am finally getting the help I need and am doing the best in school that I have done.
23. Most aspects are equal. There is no "best feature" of OKCA.
24. that the havent kicked me out yet because ive been dealing with alot and school sadly isnt my top priority
25. I don't like anything about online schools
26. You can meet people, and if someone is mean they will be punished
27. What the teachers put fourth to help us out.
28. Webmail
29. The other students
30. The creative field trips
31. nothing
32. Coursework
33. students
34. not having hte distractions of a class
35. I like that it is different from other schools. I feel that I can actually do something GOOD at OKCA, and that I might actually LEARN something.
36. Ability to work at home and chat with other students during our free time.
37. Nothing. Please let me out.

<b>What do you like least about your virtual charter school?</b>	
Nothing. I am happy with OKCA.	58%
Lack of social interaction.	32%
Other (See Responses Below)	15%

**Responses**

1. the teachers
2. alot of portfolios
3. Some of the Teachers thier are slow to grade my work
4. Live lessons
5. daughter being accused of cheating
6. Portfolios and discussions (texting the information you know and replying to two other students).
7. i think ther should be more face chats and live lessons.
8. I'm more of a loner.
9. Very little instruction on confusing assignments
10. flexibility
11. Repetitive long essays and over complicated or unclear work.
12. We do test every signal day.
13. Too much work that ya'll put on my head every day.

14. Elaborating on my answer, i think it we be nice if there were local clubs that met in person.
15. The amount of lesson given. Students in public schools are given an assignment and have almost a week to complete it and its only like a packet of 10 question. When here we have to do that like 5 times every day.
16. Some teachers dont update your grade off of assignments for sometimes maybe a week or 2
17. i was a choir student and i loved it. while oca has a choir it isnt up to scale of say edmond or moore. and from what i have seen it is more like liberal arts but for music. kinda dumb but it isn't something you can do over a phone or live lesson. losing choir is a sacrifice i wasn't prepared to make.
18. the alarm
19. I would like it if all the teachers allowed a 5 or 10 minute student chat sometimes before live lessons to interact with my classmates.
20. I can't find any type of art class. There was only photography and absolutely nothing with digital art. There are also webmails constantly being lost so my re-submissions end up not graded or even seen.
21. it just isn't for me
22. There is not a place where I can see all my live lessons.
23. For me, without a teacher always telling me what to do, it can be really stressful.
24. I dislike high school in general, they don't teach you how to pay taxes, balance a checkbook, get a job, or many things for modern life/living in it.
25. Phone calls.
26. when things get slow
27. Skills for Success
28. Small live lesson window of time to join.
29. The sports aspect again.
30. Too much work is expected in some classes. 3+ worksheets in a single slide is too high of a standard for someone of my age.
31. All the portfolio's being thrown at me all at once and feeling like I have to complete them all in that one day or else I'll reach alarm
32. its alot of reading and alot of thigs dont make sense
33. I HATE portfolios
34. there not a nouth time to go to talk with teachers.
35. You can't do the next semester's work till the next semester begins. I'm super ahead and I would like to stay that way.
36. State testing
37. nothing and I am not happy with OKCA
38. I don't like that we can have that face to face interaction with teachers
39. In my case I live fairly far away compared to other students, so school events are at a distance and they can be difficult to go to.
40. Everything. Please let me out.
41. some times it is really boring
42. a few of my teachers

### ***Comments from Question #3***

#### ***Responses***

1. E-Mail
2. live lessons (I like live lessons very much)
3. I do Live Lessons and web-mail. I call Mr. Wolfe as well.
4. ?
5. Live lesson and phone calls
6. live lessons or phone calls
7. My teachers have specific times during the week where they'll hold a live lesson for the students of his or her class.
8. Live lessons on tues and wed
9. I don't understand this question.

10. Live Lesson's are same time each week and Office hours are same time each week, but I can call them anytime between 8 and 4.
11. i dont know i have only been here for a month
12. I assume you mean my past teachers
13. Live lessons
14. (Online Live Lessons) Set time each week one or more times. along with office hours (which allows you to request help from 11:00 to 12:00) along with you can almost always call them for help
15. Assigning me lessons counts as a format right?



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