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MEDIA RELEASE

Pittsburgh Teacher Prepares for Virtual School Year *K-12 Online Learning Trend Growing throughout PA*

Throughout the state of Pennsylvania, teachers are heading back to their classrooms to finalize preparations for the coming school year as the first day of students looms around the corner. Most traditional, brick and mortar teachers are likely decorating their classrooms, organizing supplies, or rearranging their students' desks. But for teachers at the Commonwealth Connections Academy, preparing for the first day of school is quite different.

Commonwealth Connections Academy (CCA) is a public cyber charter school for grades K-12 in the state of Pennsylvania that provides its students with a state-accredited curriculum. Its teachers personally interact with their students, but they do so from one of the Academy's six locations around Pennsylvania and their lessons are broadcasted virtually to students learning at their homes throughout the state.

Jim Trautmann is one of more than 125 teachers who are employed by the Commonwealth Connections Academy. He teaches math in Seven Fields, PA, at CCA's Pittsburgh-area teaching center, which is one of the six teaching centers the academy has located around the state.

One of Trautmann's favorite aspects about CCA is the school's gifted program, which caters to students individually by offering them personalized learning plans so that they can work above their grade level if they learn at an accelerated pace.

"I feel like we are able to accomplish more with our students," says Trautmann. "It's really fulfilling."

Trautmann also says that a common misconception about cyber education is that its students don't get as much socialization as they would as students in a traditional school setting. He argues that this is untrue.

"You have to remember these kids are naturally tech-savvy," says Trautmann. "They expand on the conversations in class through emails and Facebook. A lot of times, they realize that their peers live in local communities and they hang out, too."

CCA educates more than 6,000 students statewide. When its students aren't in class, the school encourages them to go to their closest teaching center to receive tutoring and do hands-on work. CCA hosts after-school math and science workshops, organizes extracurricular clubs, and plans field trips for its students.

According to Trautmann, there's always a good turnout.

Trautmann has been teaching with CCA for three years. Before then, online education was a foreign concept to Trautmann. But now, having experienced it firsthand as a teacher, he believes firmly in the effectiveness of CCA, its programs, and the impact it makes on its students.

“It’s new, it’s different, but it really is innovation in education,” he says. “We are moving in a positive direction.”

About Connections Academy

Connections Academy is a leading provider of high-quality, highly accountable virtual schooling for students in grades K through 12. Through tuition-free public schools, and full-time and part-time private school programs, Connections Academy delivers superior, personalized education for students, with the freedom and flexibility to experience our online learning community from anywhere. The combination of certified teachers, a proven curriculum, technology tools, and community experiences creates a supportive and successful online learning opportunity for families and children who want an individualized approach to education. In the 2012–13 school year, Connections Academy will serve students in 22 states via 24 virtual public schools. It serves students worldwide through the online private school, National Connections Academy. Connections Academy offers grades K through 12, though some public school programs do not offer all grades. For more information, call 800–382–6010 or visit www.ConnectionsAcademy.com. Connections Academy and its parent company, Connections Education, are part of the global learning company Pearson (NYSE:PSO).

Like many other American moms this time of year, Michelle Midgley is helping her sons prepare for their first day of the 2012-13 school year. But when the morning of Sept. 4 rolls around the corner, she won't be waking up to walk them to the bus stop or drive them to their school's location.

On Sept. 4, Midgley's three sons, Kenny, 15, Nicholas, 14 and Sam, 12, will start their first day of school at the Commonwealth Connections Academy, a public cyber charter school for grades K-12 in the state of Pennsylvania. Instead of entering homeroom, locating their assigned seat, and surveying the dozens of familiar and unfamiliar faces around them, Kenny, Nicholas, and Sam will sit at a desk in their home's spare bedroom and turn on their computer monitors to see the faces of their school teachers for the year staring right back at them.

At Commonwealth Connections Academy, or CCA for short, teachers teach all traditional grade school subjects—math, science, language arts, social studies—but they do so from one of the Academy's six locations around the state and their lessons are broadcast over the Internet to students at home taking notes in front of a computer screen.

CCA employs over 150 teachers and enrolls more than 8,000 students.

For Midgley, her three boys are privileged students. Before enrolling at CCA, Midgley's boys were educated through the North Allegheny public school system. This will be their seventh year each as CCA students.

It's great," she says. "As students of CCA, they're engaged, learning more, and they utilize their time better."

Midgley says that giving her sons an education through CCA allows her to be more helpful to them, which comforts her. She stays with them during the day, sits in on classes, and functions as their learning coach. CCA mandates that while taking classes online, students also have a learning coach, which most often is a parent, that mentors them at home.

"It works better," says Midgley. "It allows me to oversee what they're studying. Not only does it give me more control as a parent, but it makes me more effective as my sons' mentor in pushing them to make the best of themselves."

For Midgley, there are few problems that come with sending her kids to cyber school. CCA provides its students with books and she says they are delivered to her home in July. She also enjoys saving the money that she'd have to spend shopping for school supplies if she sent her boys away to the local public school.

"We don't need backpacks or lunchboxes, and all the supplies they need are easily accessible right here in the house," she says.

Although Midgley likes having her kids at home with her during the day, they're still able to be active CCA students outside the house. CCA teachers host after-school tutoring sessions at the Academy's six teaching centers around Pennsylvania. They organize extracurricular clubs and plan field trips for their students, too.

Midgley's youngest son, Sam, plays recreational basketball with other CCA students from his area, and Kenny, her eldest, runs cross country with the North Allegheny high school team.

“As a mother, it’s wonderful to see,” says Midgley. “You send your kids to the school that you know is best for them and that will allow them to make the best of their abilities, but it’s refreshing to see that CCA still allows them to meet other people like themselves and get involved in other non-academic activities typically associated with traditional schooling.”