

Free Online School from Home Congratulates Kevin Johnson as National Merit Scholarship Semifinalist

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MTS Minnesota Connections Academy, a free online public school for K-12 students, is pleased to announce that senior Kevin Johnson is a National Merit Scholarship Semifinalist.

Johnson, a resident of Farmington, Minn., is the first National Merit Scholarship Semifinalist to be named at MTS Minnesota Connections Academy, www.ConnectionsAcademy.com. He currently takes classes full-time at the University of Minnesota through Connections Academy's Post Secondary Enrollment Option program.

The National Merit Scholarship Corporation is a non-profit organization dedicated to honoring the nation's scholastic champions, encouraging the pursuit of academic excellence, and conducting the annual National Merit Scholarship Program.

Over 1.5 million juniors in approximately 22,000 high schools across the country took the 2008 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. To be named a 2010 National Merit Scholarship Semifinalist, students needed to score among the highest in their state. Johnson is one of 15,000 Semifinalists, with 214 of the Semifinalists being from Minnesota.

"Connections Academy offered me freedom; the freedom to learn however and whenever I wanted," said Kevin Johnson. "Through the program I learned restraint and discipline, as much as I learned school subjects. Those lessons are the kind that stick with you. I can think of no better preparation for college than that."

In order to become a National Merit Scholarship Finalist, Semifinalists must complete a detailed scholarship application, write an essay, show an outstanding academic record, be endorsed and recommended by their high school principal, and earn SAT scores that confirm the student's performance on the qualifying test.

"Gifted and talented is an understatement when describing Kevin Johnson," said Melissa Nelson, Principal of MTS Minnesota Connections Academy, www.ConnectionsAcademy.com. "Kevin has a true love of learning and works hard to excel both inside and outside the classroom. Kevin started taking AP classes in 10th grade, which demonstrates his commitment to education. Our staff is extremely proud of Kevin and his accomplishment of scoring in the top one percent and being named a National Merit Scholarship Semifinalist."

Next spring some 8,200 National Merit Scholarships, worth more than \$36 million, will be awarded to high school seniors that demonstrate the most skills, achievements and potential for success in rigorous college studies.

"Being enrolled in Connections Academy has really taught Kevin about responsibility. He has a real sense of ownership about his education. He's in charge of his choices," says Kevin's mom, Holly Johnson. "We've been so impressed with the school's counseling services. They've provided us with great direction." Johnson would like to attend a smaller liberal arts college with a pre-professional engineering program.

MTS Minnesota Connections Academy, www.ConnectionsAcademy.com, with its headquarters in Minneapolis, Minn.,

combines the expertise of state-certified teachers, high quality curriculum, unique technology tools, and a vast assortment of electives, clubs and community experiences to create an individualized alternative to the brick-and-mortar classroom. Students enrolled in Connections Academy participate in state standardized testing, and the curriculum is aligned to meet or exceed Minnesota academic standards.

Connections Academy is designed to meet the needs of students and their families who are looking for a unique public school option—those who need a flexible schedule, learn at a different pace from their peers, need more individualized attention or live in isolated rural settings. Homebound and previously home-schooled students can also thrive in the program. Connections Academy operates its full-time Internet school program in Minnesota through a partnership with Minnesota Transitions Charter School.

Families interested in free online school, with some similarities to home schooling, but with the support of state-certified teachers and the accountability of public education are encouraged to learn more by calling 800-382-6010, or visiting www.ConnectionsAcademy.com.

Connections Academy is a leading national provider of high-quality, highly accountable virtual public schools in fourteen states operated in partnership with charter schools, school districts, and state departments of education. Connections Academy schools deliver top quality, personalized education for students that combines certified teachers, a proven curriculum, technology tools, and community experiences to create a supportive and successful environment for children who want an individualized approach to education. In Connections Academy's Personalized Performance Learning[®] approach, students use daily lesson plans and curriculum materials provided by Connections Academy. Teachers develop a learning plan for each student, whose progress is tracked through a proprietary, web-based Learning Management System. In 2008-2009 Connections Academy will serve students in Arizona, California (Southern and Central), Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Minnesota, Missouri (through the Missouri Virtual Instruction Program), Nevada, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas and Wisconsin. Connections Academy offers grades K through 12, though some schools do not offer all grades. For more information, call 800-382-6010 or visit www.ConnectionsAcademy.com.

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