

Arizona Embraces Online Learning

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Phoenix – March 23, 2009 – Hours before the sun rose and you opened your morning newspaper, an Arizona high school senior reported for Calculus class and turned in an assignment to her teacher. A 12-year-old competitive ice skater headed for the rink in Tempe with her entire school day tucked into her gym bag. A third grader battling cancer slept peacefully, having finished all of his lessons in preparation for his next bout of chemotherapy.

These Arizona students, and thousands like them are pioneers of the 21st century education phenomenon known as online learning. The virtual schools that serve them are headquartered around the state, and include Arizona Connections Academy, a full-time, tuition-free, virtual public school. Aided by technology and guided by state-certified, specially trained Arizona teachers, Connections Academy students can truly learn anytime and anywhere.

Online learning is growing at a pace of 30 percent annually. Experts at Harvard University have projected that as many as half of all high school courses in America will be online by 2019. As of fall 2008, 44 states, including Arizona, offer significant online learning opportunities for students*. Through online courses to supplement their “brick-and-mortar” schooling, or complete virtual school programs like Connections Academy, it is estimated that more than a million American students are enrolled in some form of online learning.

Many different types of students benefit from virtual learning. Students whose schools don’t offer advanced placement courses or specialized classes, such as Mandarin Chinese, can pursue these online. Those whose learning style requires individualized instruction at their own pace can find such accommodations online. Online learning can also be an answer for students who are pursuing elite sports or performance careers, or those who are homebound due to illness.

“Virtual education provides families with a new form of public schooling that students attend from home,” said Linda Harless, principal of Arizona Connections Academy. “The Connections’ program provides certified teachers and the flexibility of online classes with a proven curriculum. When strong parent involvement is added, you’ve got a recipe for success.”

Harless, a Mesa native, has more than 10 years experience working with public education in charter schools, traditional school districts and distance learning programs.

Through programs like these, Arizona is at the forefront of the online learning movement that is transforming American education. For more information about virtual schools visit: www.connectionsacademy.com.

* Keeping Pace with K-12 Online Learning 2008, Evergreen Consulting, November 2008.

About Connections Academy

Connections Academy is a leading national provider of high-quality, highly accountable virtual public schools in fourteen states operated in partnership with charter schools, school districts, and state departments of education. Connections Academy schools deliver top quality, personalized education for students that combines certified teachers, a proven curriculum, technology tools, and community experiences to create a supportive and successful environment for children who want an individualized approach to education. In Connections Academy's Personalized Performance Learning(R) 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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