

Utah Connections Academy

Charter School Academic and Engagement Performance for School Years 2012 and 2013

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Mission Statement

Utah Connections Academy is a pioneering virtual public charter school whose mission is to maximize academic achievement for students in grades K-12 throughout the state of Utah who need an alternative to the traditional classroom. In partnership with parents and families, Utah Connections Academy will reach students for whom this innovative virtual approach provides the best pathway to school success. The school's belief is that all students can thrive through a standards-aligned, individualized learning program that combines the best in virtual education with unique technology-based teacher productivity tools and very real connections among students, family, teachers, and the community.

School Summary

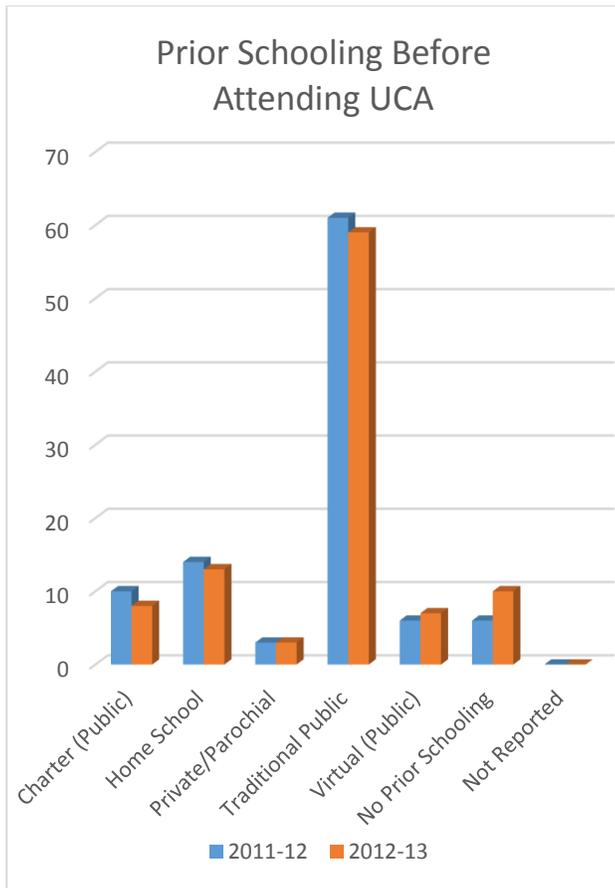
Utah Connections Academy (UCA) has the unique opportunity to provide individualized education through the use of technology. This individualized educational opportunity, with rigorous curriculum and multiple data rich assessments give UCA the ability to increase academic learning for all students. With the obvious differences between a brick-and-mortar schools, UCA is able to use a variety of teaching methods that allows them to educate students based on their learning style. Teachers are able to tailor with the use of data the required curriculum to best meet the needs of the students they serve. Intense training and pre-service give teachers tools to communicate and build relationships with students while educating them in an online environment. Guardians are given a greater opportunity to participate in the education of their students by being an active participant in the schooling environment, and working closely with school personnel. All of these things combined give UCA an avenue for families and students to have a high-quality, effective option to traditional schools that many may not have otherwise.

Brief description of student population (e.g., number of students by grade, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, etc.)

Enrollment and Demographic Summary: Utah Connections Academy has grown from 246 students as of 6/30/2012 to 746 as of 11/30/2013. Online schooling is popular with students seeking an alternative route versus the traditional classroom. Students enrolling in UCA are generally far ahead or far behind their peers; located in rural areas; students pursuing artistic or athletic or vocational opportunities; homebound due to illness or disability; and students with special needs. Most of UCA's student population comes from traditional schools (59%), and the majority of growth is secondary students enrolling at Utah Connections Academy, which are at risk academically, behind on credits to graduate and have moved from school to school, finally opting for virtual schooling.

Enrollment Summary 2013-14			
Total	K-6	7-8	9-12
749	270	164	315
	36%	21%	42%
Special Group Summary 2013-14			
Sped	504	Gifted	Low Income
44	12	35	197
10%	3%	8%	42%

Graduation Rate: The minimum requirement to receive a graduation rate from the state of Utah is a graduating class of ten students. UCA has not received an official graduation rate from the state due to the numbers being less than ten.

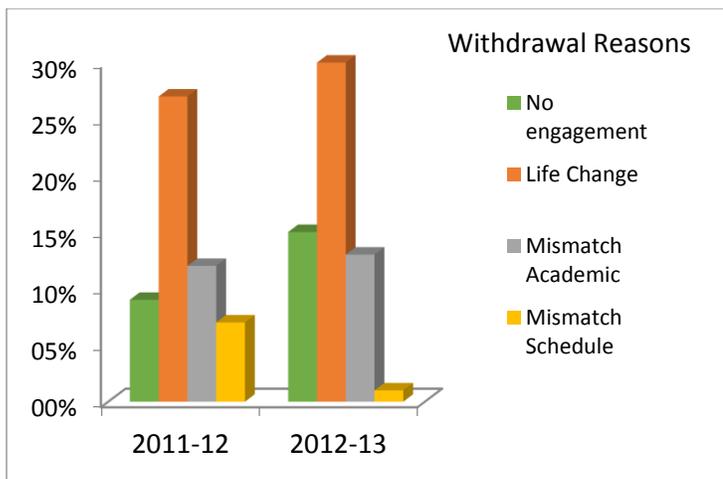


ACT: In 2011-12, only two students took the ACT Test. In 2012-13, there were 14 out of 28 juniors that took the ACT Test. The average scores for 2012–13 were: Math – 20 (National Ranking – 51); Reading – 24 (National Ranking – 72); English – 22 (National Ranking - 63); Science – 20 (National Ranking 47); Writing – 23 (National Ranking – 70); Composite – 21 (National Ranking 55).

School analysis of the data points included in this report

Retention: UCA had a decline of reenrollment of .6% from 2012 to 2013 (65.9% to 65.3%). But the Within Year enrollment improved from 47% to 72%, an increase of 68%.

Virtual schools in general have a higher mobility rate than traditional schools. The following chart shows the breakdown of reasons given for student withdrawals at UCA. Those caused by life changes represent those who move. A family with a schedule mismatch is generally because the curriculum is was more rigorous than they expected. A mismatch schedule includes those families in which the online schooling takes more time than families anticipated or students who desire more face-to-face socialization. Many families withdraw from school and give no reason for the change. At other times students may be withdrawn due to inactivity in the program or no engagement.

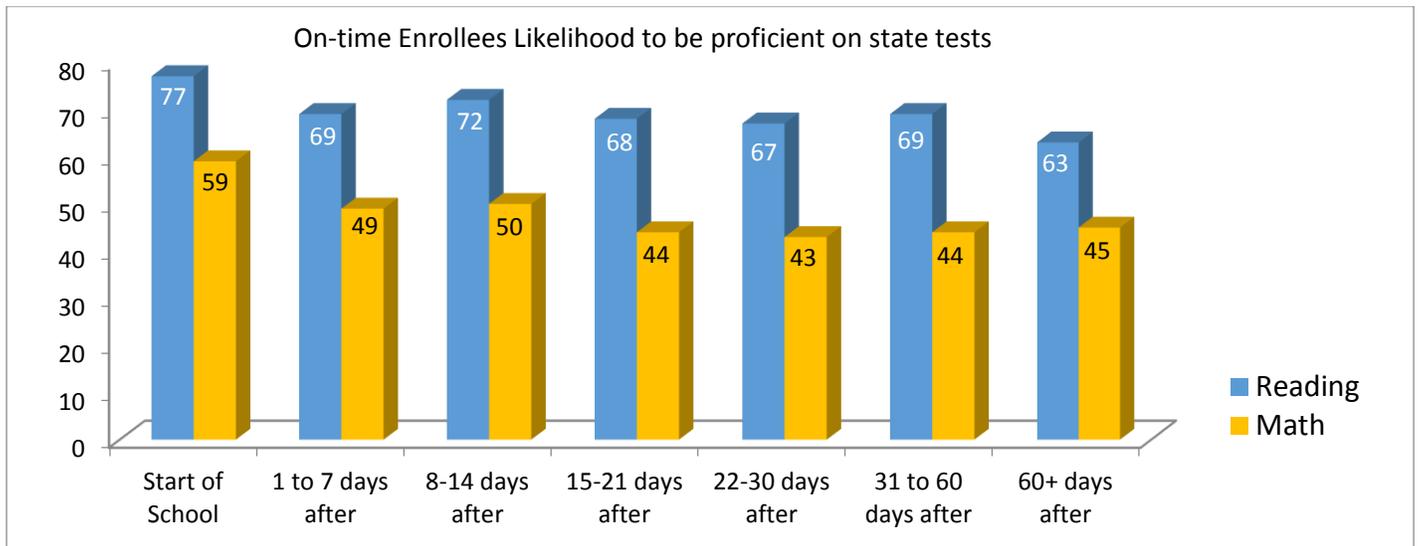


Academic Proficiency: Although performance declined in a number of grades from 2011-12 to 2012-13 on CRT and DWA state tests, it should be noted that the school experienced a large amount of growth in enrollment between 2011-12 to 2012-13 and was in its 2nd year of existence. Students performed better in Language Arts than other subjects and 6th and 10th grades demonstrated gains in 2012-13. Proficiency was at or above 80% for grades 7 through 10. Seventh Grade showed the highest levels of proficiency in both the CRT Math and Language Arts by exceeding the statewide level of performance for both Math and Reading. Math performance improved for 4th and 6th grades. In Science, performance improved for grades 4-8. Another encouraging sign of academic proficiency was shown in 4th grade with significant gains in Math (44% to 65%) and Language Arts (56% to 75%).

Needed supports to improve your school’s academic and engagement performance

Initiatives for 2013-14:

- Students are more successful in a virtual school if they begin on the first day and complete the school orientations before starting courses. For late enrollees, the success of students scoring proficient on state tests drops from 77% on the first week of school to 63% if enrolled 60+ days late in Language Arts and 59% to 45% in Math. To address this declining rate, UCA increased training opportunities for caretakers and students before the start of school and has created an onboarding course for late enrollees.



- UCA will also identify/focus on content area strands with low performance rates and track these areas through weekly meetings of Professional Learning Communities.
- Teachers will engage in monthly professional development.
- Teachers will ensure that synchronous lessons are linked to common core standards and low performance strands.
- All teachers will use a 6 trait writing rubric for written assignments for grading consistency throughout the school.
- Interventions and small group synchronous instruction will be required for struggling students.
- Students at risk will be on a “Performance Improvement Plan” (PIP) and their engagement monitored.
- High school students will receive preparation lessons on ACT Testing.
- The school will promote enrollment in AP courses and exams.
- Our school counselor will increase college field trip opportunities.
- UCA will allow HS students to take state competency exams to recover credit.

School's Overall Score Goals for 2014-15

Goal	Description
Official State Test Results	All official published state test proficiency rates for the school will meet or exceed the state average. The calculation is a ratio of the school's result to the state average for each tested subject-grade level. Each ratio is capped at 1.00 and a weighted average is computed based on the number of tests taken by students at the school and officially counted.
Academic Growth	100% of returning students' (enrolled for state testing last school year and this school year) state test scores will indicate proficiency or better, or will show improvement of at least one category in 4th through 8th grade Reading and Math (e.g., from "Below Basic" to "Basic"). Reading and Math will be calculated separately and averaged.
Promotion	100% of full academic year students will promote to the next grade (K-8) or earn at least one fourth of the required HS credits for a standard diploma in the school year (grades 9-11). This will be assessed as of the end of the school year as compared with the beginning of the school year.
Senior Graduation & Plans	100% of full academic year 12th graders will graduate and be accepted to one or more post-secondary options (2 or 4 year college, accredited vocational school, and/or military branch).
Parent Satisfaction	School will have an average of 100% positive responses on the 21 Parent Satisfaction Survey questions that are most directly affected by schools.
Student Retention	The school will have a 100% "during school year" retention rate, as reported in the June 30 Monthly School Report.