

# 5 questions to ask when considering online schooling



**Allison Galvin**  
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The Oregon Legislature's Joint Committee on Student Success should be applauded for touring the state from March to October, holding hearings to listen to students, teachers, parents and community leaders. Committee members are listening for what's working and what's not in our public schools in an effort to improve academic performance for all students.

The committee has heard from several families about the importance of having full-time virtual public schools available to students.

Families looking for a change in their student's educational environment may be checking out other options before school starts in the fall. When checking out online public schools, like Oregon Connections Academy (ORCA), there are a few key questions to keep in mind.

## What is full-time virtual school?

Oregon Connections Academy offers tuition-free public school delivered to a student's home, or anywhere there's an internet connection. Courses aligned to state standards are delivered online and teachers host frequent real-time classroom sessions. Students and teachers also communicate by phone and email on a regular basis.

## How involved are parents?

At many full-time virtual schools, a parent or other

trusted adult is designated as the "learning coach" monitoring student progress. Parental participation is important for this type of learning. According to a recent survey of ORCA parents, 24 percent said being more involved in their child's education was a top reason they considered an online school.

## What about the curriculum?

Virtual public schools are required to follow state standards. At Oregon Connections Academy we combine state-of-the-art technology with top education resources to create a rigorous curriculum. In addition to a wide variety of electives, and courses which count as dual college credit, online schools including ORCA have Career Technical Education programs.

Connecting with students is often the key to academic success. Teachers work with families to develop personalized learning plans that meet the needs of each student.

## Do students socialize with their peers?

Many online public schools offer opportunities for socialization both online and in-person. At Oregon Connections Academy, we have numerous clubs and around 200 field trips statewide each school year. With the flexibility of online school, families can have freedom to participate in activities such as youth sports, scouts and more.

## Why do families choose online schools?

When we recently surveyed ORCA parents about the most important reasons they considered online school, nearly half mentioned the flexible schedule, 46

percent said dissatisfaction with the local public school, and 39 percent wanted a safe environment for their child to learn. This form of non-traditional education can be an alternative for all types of students, but it's not a good fit for every student. Talking to a parent with children already enrolled at the online school you're evaluating can help get their perspective on the program.

One of my favorite days of the school year is the in-person graduation ceremony. The student speaker at commencement a couple of years ago put it best:

"We are not here just because we live in the same school district, we are here because each and every one of us choose to be here. No other graduating class can truly say that. Every single one of us has an entirely different story to tell, yet we all crossed the same finish line."

The rewards come every day, knowing we're trying to make a difference for each student in our school. Whether it is a young child who enrolled because allergies prevent them from attending a regular classroom setting, a teen with anxiety struggling to stay in school, or a star athlete looking for flexibility to travel and still get a high-quality education.

While summer is a busy season for family activities, parents may have a little flex time without the school year challenges of homework and shuttling kids off to sporting events. If you want to take time to learn more about virtual schools and see if it's right for your family, visit [OregonConnectionsAcademy.com](http://OregonConnectionsAcademy.com)

Allison Galvin, Oregon Connections Academy Executive Director from Salem. More information about Oregon Connections Academy is available at [www.OregonConnectionsAcademy.com](http://www.OregonConnectionsAcademy.com) or by calling (800) 382-6010.

# High temperatures lead to burn ban in Marion County

**Olivia Heersink**  
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The Marion County Fire Defense Board has issued a district-wide burn ban effective June 24 in response to high temperature forecasts, limited rainfall and ongoing dry conditions throughout the area.

Officials said the ban is place until further notice and includes recreational campfires, fire pits, yard debris, agricultural and permitted open burning.

Anyone found in violation of these restrictions may be held liable for the cost of putting out a fire and for any property damage resulting from an illegal fire.

Officials ask those living in rural areas to maintain a defensible space by monitoring surrounding growth near homes and other structures, as well as adequate access for firefighting equipment.

The ban does not apply to the U.S. Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management regulated areas.

Marion County Fire Defense Board offers the following advice:

- Know fire risks and obey fire restrictions, such as campfire bans.

- Avoid parking or driving on dry grass as hot vehicles can start a wildfire.

- Vehicles are required to have a shovel and fire extinguisher or at least a gallon of water in many areas.

- Do not use candles, fireworks, tiki torches or other open flames in wildland areas.

For more information, residents can check with their local fire agency or call the Burn Information Line at 877-982-0011.

Contact reporter Olivia Heersink at [ohersink@statesmanjournal.com](mailto:ohersink@statesmanjournal.com), 503-399-6657 or follow her on Twitter @heersinkolivia.

# Marion County deputy charged with theft

**Olivia Heersink** | Salem Statesman Journal  
USA TODAY NETWORK

A Marion County Sheriff's deputy arrested Thursday is accused of selling several stolen shotguns.

Sean Thomas Banks, 49, of Keizer, was booked into the Linn County Jail on five counts of first-degree theft and one count of official misconduct.

During a three-year period, Banks reportedly stole and sold five shotguns, according to court documents. The charges date back to October 2015 and continue until January.

Four of the five weapons involved are identified in documents as a Remington 1100 shotgun, a Weatherby Orion 12-gauge shotgun, a Beretta 12-gauge shotgun and a Winchester Model 23 XTR shotgun.



**Banks**

Court records list two women as victims in the case.

Marion County Sheriff Jason Myers said his office learned the detective was being investigated by Salem Police in March. Banks, who has been with the agency for five years, was put on administrative leave July 12.

He was arraigned 3 p.m. Friday in the Marion County Circuit Court and remains in the Linn County Jail on a \$55,000 bond. His next hearing is scheduled 10:30 a.m. July 31.

Banks has hired Salem criminal attorneys Walter Todd and David Kuhns. Marion County Deputy District Attorney Keir Boettcher will oversee the case for the state. No further information has been released.

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