

Ismail ibn Ali  
**Site Context**

**School Description**

I work at ConneXions School for the Arts (also known as ConneXions and formerly ConneXions Community Leadership Academy). ConneXions is located in the Greater Mondawmin Area of West Baltimore. ConneXions is a charter school operated by Baltimore Teacher Network, Inc. and opened in 2001 serving a single 6<sup>th</sup>-grade class. Currently it serves 342 students total in grades 6-12. The school has an arts program that allows students to partake in tracks centered upon different arts disciplines such as West African Drum, Painting and Drawing, Dance, Theater, and Photography. Our students come from different areas of Baltimore but most students are from West Baltimore.

**Mission**

*“ConneXions cultivates academic and artistic excellence, cultural identity and community awareness in every student.”*

**School Demographics (2011-2012 SY)**

Enrollment	Black/ African American	Other Race/ Ethnicity	Mobility	FARMS	Special Ed.	Title 1	ESL
342	99%	1%	19.6%	76.9%	22.8%	N/A	N/A

**Assessment Data (2011-2012 SY)**

Middle School: MSA (% Proficient or Advanced)				High School: HSA (% Taken and Passed)	
	6th	7th	8 <sup>th</sup>		ALL STUDENTS
Math	48.0	22.9	24.6	Algebra	67.7
ELA	72.0	48.6	69.4	Biology	59.5
Science	N/A	N/A	18.0%	English	76.9

At ConneXions, students demonstrate their mastery of content by presenting an exhibition. The exhibition process involves students writing an essay, research paper, or lab report about a topic for a given class. The students must then present their ideas to a panel of teachers and community members who can question the students to ascertain if the students truly understand the content and skills of the class. This is done for every academic class and for the arts classes at the end of the year.

According to the recent Renewal Report issued by Baltimore City Public Schools, ConneXions' absolute HSA scores were rated effective in English (69.7%) and developing in Algebra (63.6%). Currently, 75.8% of seniors at ConneXions passed all their HSA examinations, with 18.2% requiring bridge projects and 6.1% waiving the examination (2012 Maryland Report Card, 2012).

### **Teaching Placement**

When hired at ConneXions in 2011, I was hired to teach Chemistry I. Chemistry I is the only chemistry class offered at ConneXions and students usually take it in the ninth grade and it is a required course for graduation. However, I generally have a number of students who are sophomores, juniors and seniors. I have taught Chemistry I for the last three school semesters. As of this semester I am also teaching Introduction to Foundations of Technology. This is a required elective for graduation and being an elective, I have many students of varying grade levels. In terms of students with Individualized Education Plans, I have 11 students who receive accommodations or modifications via the IEP process. My classes have a variety of students with different academic levels.

### **School Schedule**

My current school day is as follows:

8:00 – 9:40am	P1	Introduction to Foundations of Technology	15 students total
9:45 – 11:10am	P2	Chemistry I	21 students total
11:15 – 11:55am		Lunch	
12:00 – 12:30pm		Advisory (10 <sup>th</sup> grade males)	
12:30 – 2:00pm	P5	Planning	
2:05 – 3:30pm	P6	Introduction to Foundations of Technology	17 students total

### **Planning and Curriculum**

At ConneXions, we do not have any departments. However, I am working with the 8<sup>th</sup> grade physical science teacher to collaboratively plan. Each of us has two different classes we teach and we realized the need to work together to make planning for chemistry effective. We base our curriculum design around the framework "Understanding By Design" and we implement project-based instruction heavily. We are currently working on a curriculum mapping project and moving to vertically align our classes throughout grades 6-12.

I am also responsible for helping students who have Maryland High School Assessment (HSA) Bridge project requirements for Biology. These students see me twice a week for one hour to work on their projects, which substitute the need for a passing score on the Biology HSA. In terms of extra-curricular activities, I am the advisor to the student

newspaper club. I am also an active member of the Instructional Committee for ConneXions that develops professional development learning cycles for the school. I am the head of the task cycle, which looks at how teachers create daily tasks and how those are tied to a larger unit.

## **REFERENCES**

Maryland State Department of Education (2011). 2012 Maryland Report Card: ConneXions Community Leadership Academy Demographics. Retrieved from <http://mdreportcard.org/Demographics.aspx?K=300325&WDATA=School#MOBILITYgrade5all>

Office of New Initiatives, Baltimore City Public Schools. (2013). Renewal Report, 325 ConneXions Community Leadership Academy, 1-6.