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Commissioner

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education
From: Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J.C. Riley".

Date: March 14, 2022
Subject: Commonwealth of Massachusetts Virtual Schools – Renewal Recommendations for Greater Commonwealth Virtual School and TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School

Overview

Massachusetts law, [G.L. c. 71, § 94](#), authorizes the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) to adopt regulations governing publicly funded virtual schools and, through the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department), to oversee the establishment and operation of Commonwealth of Massachusetts virtual schools (CMVS). A CMVS is a public school governed by a board of trustees where teachers primarily teach from a remote location using the Internet or other computer-based methods and students are not required to be located at the physical premises of the school.

Under the statute, the Board may grant up to ten certificates to operate such schools, provided that not more than two percent of students statewide attend a CMVS. The virtual school statute, at G.L. c. 71, § 94(k), funds a CMVS based upon the funding for school choice under G.L. c. 76, § 12B: the sending district is charged a set tuition, and the Department transfers the funds from the district to the CMVS.

Two virtual schools currently operate in Massachusetts under certificates the Board granted: Greater Commonwealth Virtual School¹ (GCVS) and TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School (TECCA). Each school is seeking renewal of its certificate this year.²

During the pandemic, both CMVSs experienced a surge in enrollment demand. In order to meet this demand, I granted both CMVSs additional seats until the end of the certificate term in order to fulfill this demand and to allow medically vulnerable students to access this educational option. Additionally, CMVSs sold bundles of academic courses to school districts during the 2020-2021 and

¹ Greenfield Commonwealth Virtual School received approval from the Commissioner to change its name to Greater Commonwealth Virtual School as of September 2021.

² A CMVS certificate granted by the Board is effective for three to five years, unless it is revoked as provided in the statute and regulations. 603 CMR 52.04(4)(a).

2021-2022 school years to support medically vulnerable students.

Pursuant to the virtual school statute, G.L. c. 71, § 94(j), and the CMVS regulations at 603 CMR 52.11, I recommend that the Board renew the certificates for GCVS and TECCA for an additional four years. I further recommend that the Board place conditions³ on the schools' certificates to address concerns related to academic performance and governance issues. The rationale for these recommendations is provided in this memorandum.

Using quantitative and qualitative evidence, the Department evaluated the performance of both CMVSs against the statutory requirements for renewal⁴ and the [Commonwealth Virtual School Performance Criteria](#). The evidence included, but was not limited to, state assessment data, the schools' performance on their Accountability Plans, annual reports, audited financial information, and data collected from accountability reviews conducted in 2019, 2020, and 2021. The renewal process began with the submission of an application in June 2021 and renewal inspections in October 2021 for TECCA and November 2021 for GCVS. Renewal inspection reports are available upon request.

Neither school has fully delivered on the promises of its mission. The attached Summaries of Review outline areas that require improvement. In making my recommendations, I have carefully considered each school's history, each school's student population, the limited accountability data due to the pandemic, and the track record of virtual schools in Massachusetts and nationwide. Key considerations follow.

- Focus group interviews with families of CMVS students demonstrate continued demand for a virtual option because it benefits students with unique circumstances. Evidence provided by families indicates that CMVSs provide a safe educational option for students with social and emotional needs, students who experienced bullying in traditional public schools, students with chronic medical conditions that make consistent attendance in-person difficult, and academically or athletically gifted students who desire more flexible programming. As noted in the table below, both GCVS and TECCA enroll students with disabilities/504 plans and low-income students at rates above state averages. Additionally, both CMVS enroll English learners at rates below state averages.

	Students with disabilities	Students with 504 plans	Students who are low income	English learners
% of GCVS	22.5	7.0	57.7	1.7
% of TECCA	20.6	9.0	54.0	1.4
% of State	18.9	5.0	43.8	11.0

- Neither school's results have consistently met academic standards set by the statewide accountability system. Despite coordinating testing locations across the state each year, both schools have struggled to meet the state assessment participation levels required by law, both schools produce results that are well below state averages,⁵ and both schools have been

³ Pursuant to 603 CMR 52.12(1), the "Board or Commissioner may impose conditions on a virtual school's certificate for violations of law, failure to improve student achievement, failure to comply with the terms of the virtual school's certificate, or failure to remain viable."

⁴ "When deciding on certificate renewal, the board shall consider progress made in student academic achievement and whether the school has met its obligations and commitments under the certificate." G.L. c. 71, §94(j).

⁵ Student achievement rates at TECCA in 2021 exceeded or were comparable to state averages; students in grades 3 through 8 took modified MCAS examinations and virtual testing was allowed.

identified as performing in the lowest percentile levels across the state. Results of these two virtual schools are similar to the academic results seen in virtual schools nationwide.⁶ Further, the COVID-19 pandemic forced changes to MCAS administrations in 2020 and 2021; these changes created a lack of academic data making it difficult to assess academic progress during the schools' current certificate term. Renewing the schools' certificates with conditions that clearly outline areas for improvement or correction gives both schools additional time to demonstrate academic improvement and retains the Board's ability to impose probation should the school's performance worsen.

A summary of each school's performance during the certificate term, and my recommendations for renewal with specific conditions, are presented below.

Greater Commonwealth Virtual School			
Year Opened	July 1, 2013	Current Age of School	9
Maximum Enrollment	1,200	Current Grade Span	K-12
Current Enrollment	1,030 ⁷	Year(s) Renewed	2016, 2019
Students on Waitlist	731 ⁸	Location of Administrative Offices	238 Main Street 3rd Floor Greenfield, MA 01301
Mission Statement: The Greater Commonwealth Virtual School, a public school of choice, serves students from across Massachusetts who need a learning community that is accessible and flexible. We give our students and their families choices in what, how, when, and where they learn. As a pioneer of online personalized learning, we empower our educators to tailor learning experiences to each student's strengths, interests, and challenges. We redefine and change how students and teachers engage through innovative technology, while ensuring mastery of competencies embedded in a rigorous curriculum.			

The Massachusetts Virtual Academy of Greenfield (MAVA) opened in 2010 under the innovation school law, G.L. c. 71, § 92. In January 2013, Chapter 379 of the Acts of 2012, "An Act Establishing Commonwealth Virtual Schools" (Act), was enacted, most of which is codified as G.L. c. 71, § 94. By statute, MAVA ceased to exist as of July 1, 2013. Section 6 of the Act required the Board to grant a certificate for GCVS to operate a CMVS upon submission of a timely application that addressed the information specified in G.L. c. 71, § 94.

The Department received an application from Greenfield on April 22, 2013, to establish a new CMVS beginning in the 2013-2014 school year. On June 25, 2013, the Board granted a three-year certificate to the board of trustees of GCVS, effective July 1, 2013. The board of trustees assumed governance of the CMVS, now known as GCVS. During the transition, the Greenfield Public Schools provided services to the school through April 1, 2014, under a memorandum of

⁶ "Virtual Schools in the U.S. 2021" from the National Education Policy Center can be found at <https://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/virtual-schools-annual-2021>.

⁷ This is the number as of October 1, 2021. See [Profiles](#).

⁸ This is the number as of November 15, 2021, from the GCVS enrollment update submitted prior to the renewal inspection

understanding. To assist GCVS in meeting the standards expected of a CMVS, the Board imposed several conditions on its certificate.⁹

GCVS continued to have challenges resulting in further conditions and probation; GCVS operated under probationary status from October 2014 until March 2019, with the Board twice modifying the conditions on the school's certificate. Specifically, during the school's first certificate term, based on evidence collected during accountability reviews, in October 2014 the Board placed GCVS on probation with additional conditions for the remainder of the school's certificate term. In February 2016, the Board renewed the school's certificate for a three-year period from July 1, 2016, through June 30, 2019, and extended the school's probation. At its meeting on March 27, 2018, the [Board extended the school's probationary status](#). In March 2019, due to GCVS's progress in meeting probationary conditions, the [Board removed the school from probation](#) and renewed the school's certificate for three years with six conditions. A report on these conditions follows.

Progress Toward Meeting Conditions

Condition 1a: Until further notice, GCVS must continue to submit to the Department, at virtualschools@doe.mass.edu, board meeting agendas and materials prior to each board meeting at the same time that these items are sent to the school's board members. Further, the school must submit to the Department the minutes of these proceedings as soon as the school's board approves them. The Department reserves the right to require the submission of additional information, such as quarterly or monthly financial statements, if the board materials do not already include this information. The school must provide such additional information within two business days.

Status: Met

The school submitted board meeting agendas, materials, and minutes for full board and committee meetings as required. Additionally, submitted board packages contained monthly financial statements.

Condition 1b: GCVS must continue to submit to the Department weekly student enrollment reports.

Status: Met

The school submitted weekly enrollment updates to the Department since the imposition of this condition.

Condition 2: GCVS may enroll a maximum of 750 students.

Status: Suspended

The impact of COVID-19 on schools greatly increased the parent demand for enrollment in both CMVSs. Beginning in March 2020, GCVS experienced a significant increase in enrollment demand resulting in large waitlists. In order to provide an option for families during the pandemic, GCVS requested a temporary increase in its enrollment until the end of its certificate term in 2022. In July and October 2020, I granted temporary increases in the school's enrollment through the end of the certificate term to a maximum of 1,050 students. Additionally, in February 2022, I granted an additional 150 seats to a maximum of 1,200 students. I also approved an amendment to GCVS's certificate requiring the school to give first priority in admission to students whose medical conditions prevented them from attending school in person.

⁹ These terms were described in the Commissioner's memorandum to the Board dated June 18, 2013, which can be found at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/boe/docs/fy2013/2013-06/item3.html>.

Condition 3: Beginning April 1, 2019, and monthly thereafter, GCVS shall provide the Department with an update on the implementation of its plan for serving students who are English learners.

Status: Met, with concerns noted

GCVS submitted regular updates on implementation of its plan to serve English learners. As noted in the attached Summary of Review, however, GCVS has not implemented the corrective action plan that the Department (through the Office of Language Acquisition) required in response to the Tiered Focused Monitoring Report for GCVS in 2021.

Condition 4: By June 30, 2019, GCVS must submit to the Department a comprehensive evaluation of the school's mathematics, English language arts, and science programs. Additionally, the comprehensive evaluation should address instruction, supports for all learners, and the degree to which all students have equitable access to the school's academic program. Such comprehensive evaluation must be conducted by an external consultant(s) acceptable to and approved in advance by the Department. The evaluation must be informed by disaggregated performance data from the statewide accountability system and aligned to the CMVS Performance Criteria.

Status: Met

In April 2019, GCVS engaged an external consultant, approved in advance by the Department, to conduct the required evaluation. The external consultant conducted a school quality review in May 2019 and produced a report with areas of strength (mission and key design elements; compliance; assessment and program evaluation; social, emotional, and health needs; family and community engagement; and school leadership) and areas needing improvement (access and equity, student performance, curriculum, instruction, diverse learners, and professional climate).

Condition 5: By July 31, 2019, the school must submit to the Department for approval a comprehensive action plan (action plan) for improving academic performance and addressing other areas for improvement identified by the comprehensive evaluation. Such action plan must include a needs assessment aligned to the 2018 statewide accountability results for GCVS. The action plan must also specify the evidence-based strategies the school will use to improve performance in mathematics, English language arts, and science for all student subgroups. The plan should also include strategies to improve instruction, supports for all learners, and the degree to which all students have equitable access to the school's academic program. The action plan must set clear and specific implementation benchmarks, with a clear timetable and deadlines for completion of key tasks, sufficient to allow the school's board of trustees and the Department to monitor implementation. The school must provide evidence that it has shared its improvement plan with the school's community including, but not limited to, students, parents, and staff.

Status: Met

The Department granted an extension for submitting the action plan, and the school submitted it on August 20, 2019. The Department requested extensive revisions to the plan to align the goals, objectives, and benchmarks with the conditions placed on the school's certificate. The school completely revised the action plan and submitted it on December 5, 2019. The Department approved the final action plan on December 30, 2019.

Condition 6: By December 31, 2021, the school must demonstrate that it is an academic success by providing evidence that the school has exhibited significant and sustained academic improvement in

mathematics, English language arts, and science on the statewide assessment for all student subgroups.

Status: Not Met

Since its inception, GCVS has not provided adequate evidence of academic success. The school has consistently performed below the tenth percentile when compared to other schools administering similar assessments. The Board imposed this condition based on MCAS data from [2017](#) and [2018](#). In terms of performance on the Next-Generation MCAS in grades 3 through 8, GCVS scores lagged behind statewide averages and showed a slight decline from 2017 to 2018.

Since the imposition of the condition, GCVS administered the MCAS in [2019](#). Statewide assessments were not administered in spring 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Statewide assessments were administered in spring 2021, but students in grades 3 through 8 participated in a modified MCAS test, and results were not used to issue accountability determinations.

In 2019, GCVS was classified as requiring assistance or intervention.¹⁰ According to the statewide accountability system, the school made moderate progress toward targets and is in the 4th percentile when compared to other schools administering similar assessments. The additional reasons for classifying GCVS as requiring assistance or intervention were its low graduation rates and low MCAS participation rates, especially for students with disabilities.

GCVS did not provide additional, affirmative evidence of academic success within its Application for Renewal.

¹⁰The Department did not issue school, district, or state accountability determinations for 2020 due to the cancellation of state assessments and school closures related to COVID-19. The Department also did not issue accountability determinations in 2021.

Renewal of Certificate

A summary of the performance record of GCVS during its current certificate term is provided in the attached Summary of Review. Below are the school’s ratings from its Summary of Review.

Greater Commonwealth Virtual School			
Guiding area	Criteria	Rating ¹¹	
Faithfulness to certificate	1. Mission and key design elements: The school is faithful to its mission, implements the key design elements outlined in its certificate, and substantially meets its accountability plan goals.	● Partially Meets	
	2. Access and equity: The school ensures program access and equity for all students eligible to attend the school.	● Partially Meets	
	3. Compliance: The school compiles a record of compliance with the terms of its certificate and applicable state and federal laws and regulations.	Not Rated ¹²	
Academic and program success	4. Student performance: The school consistently meets state student performance standards for academic growth, proficiency, and college and career readiness.	Requiring Assistance or Intervention	
	5. Program delivery: The school delivers an academic program that delivers improved academic outcomes and educational success for all students.	Curriculum	● Partially Meets
		Instruction	● Meets
		Assessment and program evaluation	● Partially Meets
		Diverse learners	● Partially Meets
	6. Culture and family engagement: The school supports students’ social and emotional health in a safe and respectful learning environment that engages families.	Social, emotional, and health needs	● Meets
Family and community engagement			
Organizational viability	7. Capacity: The school sustains a well-functioning organizational structure and creates a professional working climate for all staff.	School leadership	● Partially Meets
		Professional climate	● Meets
		Contractual relationships	N/A
	8. Governance: The Board of Trustees act as public agents authorized by the state and provide competent governance to ensure the success and sustainability of the school.		● Partially Meets
	9. Finance: The school maintains a sound and stable financial condition that operates in a fiscally responsible and publicly accountable manner.		● Meets

¹¹ Rating Key:

- **Exceeds:** The school fully and consistently meets the criterion and is a potential exemplar in this area.
- **Meets:** The school generally meets the criterion and/or minor concern(s) are noted.
- **Partially Meets:** The school meets some aspects of the criterion but not others and/or moderate concern(s) are noted.
- **Falls Far Below:** The school falls far below the criterion and/or significant concerns are noted.

¹² Due to the number of items required for a CMVS to be in compliance with state and federal regulations and guidance, the Department does not rate this category.

Recommendation

Pursuant to the regulations for Commonwealth of Massachusetts Virtual Schools at 603 CMR 52.11 and 52.12(1), I recommend that the Board renew the certificate for GCVS for four years with eight conditions. While the school has implemented an action plan to improve its educational program as required by the 2019 renewal conditions, concerns still remain regarding its poor academic outcomes; the quality of its program delivery, particularly for English learners; and its organizational capacity¹³. These are further detailed in the attached Summary of Review.

I recommend that the Board impose the eight conditions that follow.

1. Greater Commonwealth Virtual School must continue to submit to the Department, at virtuelschools@mass.gov, board meeting agendas and materials prior to each board meeting at the same time that these items are sent to the school's board members. Further, the school must submit to the Department the minutes of these proceedings as soon as the school's board approves them. The Department reserves the right to require the submission of additional information, such as quarterly or monthly financial statements, if board materials do not already include this information. The school must provide such additional information within two business days.
2. By July 15, 2022, Greater Commonwealth Virtual School must conduct, document, and submit to the Department evaluations of its special education and English learner education (ELE) programs in a manner consistent with Department expectations. Such evaluations must include comparative data analyses, interpretation of results, and recommendations for needed changes to each program.
3. By August 1, 2022, Greater Commonwealth Virtual School must develop and include four-year goals for non-statewide assessments in its Accountability Plan. These goals must be sufficient to allow the school to demonstrate a track record of academic success during the certificate term.
4. By August 15, 2022, Greater Commonwealth Virtual School must complete actions and reporting as required by the Department's Office of Language Acquisition.
5. By September 1, 2022, Greater Commonwealth Virtual School must submit for Department approval an updated version of its comprehensive action plan from 2019 to improve academic performance and that addresses other areas for improvement outlined in the summary of review for 2022. The action plan must set clear and specific benchmarks with a timetable and deadlines for completion of key tasks that is sufficient to allow the school's board of trustees and the Department to monitor implementation.
6. The school must report on a quarterly basis to the Department and its board of trustees on the progress toward meeting the benchmarks in its updated comprehensive action plan, including the timetable and deadlines for completion of key tasks.

¹³ For a school in its ninth year of operation, GCVS is still working to implement a clearly defined set of goals as well as working to define and delineate roles and responsibilities among leaders, staff, management, and board of trustees' members. Additionally, the school's board of trustees has not always operated in a manner that fulfills its fiduciary duty, nor has the board engaged in strategic planning or continuous improvement planning.

7. By September 1, 2022, the board of trustees must engage a consultant and participate in training about governance roles and responsibilities, including obligations related to the Open Meeting Law. By October 15, 2022, the board must develop an action plan and schedule for adequate oversight of the school according to the CMVS Performance Criteria, Criterion 8: Governance.
8. By December 31, 2024, the school must demonstrate that it is an academic success by providing evidence of significant and sustained academic improvement in mathematics, English language arts, and science for all students and all student subgroups.

In addition to meeting the terms of the conditions, GCVS must comply with the terms of its certificate. Failure of GCVS to meet the conditions within the timelines specified may result in immediate suspension and revocation of the school’s certificate.

TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School			
Date Opened	July 1, 2014	Current Age of School	8
Maximum Enrollment	3,000	Current Grade Span	K-12
Current Enrollment	2,686 ¹⁴	Year(s) Renewed	2017
Students on Waitlist	1,150 ¹⁵	Location of Administrative Offices	141 Mansion Drive Suite 300 East Walpole, MA 02032
Mission Statement:			
TEC Connections Academy will provide Massachusetts students a quality public school experience.			

The Education Cooperative (TEC) as the “founder entity” submitted an application for a virtual certificate to the Department in spring 2013; on February 25, 2014, the Board granted a three-year certificate to TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School (TECCA). TECCA was the second certificate the Board awarded for a CMVS.

Since its founding, TECCA has maintained a contractual relationship with Connections Education LLC (CE) in which CE provides the English language arts, science, social studies, and mathematics curricula for students in grades K through 12 and the school’s learning management system.

In February 2017, the Board renewed the school’s certificate for a five-year term with conditions requiring the school to submit a detailed plan by March 2017 for ensuring that not less than 95 percent of students participate in the spring 2017 MCAS tests and submit a detailed plan for serving students who are English language learners by April 2017. TECCA met both conditions by the corresponding deadlines.

¹⁴ This is the number as of October 1, 2021. See [Profiles](#).

¹⁵ This is the number as of November 5, 2021, that TECCA submitted after its renewal inspection.

Renewal of Certificate

A summary of the performance record of TECCA during its current certificate term is provided in the attached Summary of Review. Below are the school’s ratings from its Summary of Review.

TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School			
Guiding area	Criteria	Rating ¹⁶	
Faithfulness to certificate	1. Mission and key design elements: The school is faithful to its mission, implements the key design elements outlined in its certificate, and substantially meets its accountability plan goals.	● Partially Meets	
	2. Access and equity: The school ensures program access and equity for all students eligible to attend the school.	● Meets	
	3. Compliance: The school compiles a record of compliance with the terms of its certificate and applicable state and federal laws and regulations.	Not Rated ¹⁷	
Academic and program success	4. Student performance: The school consistently meets state student performance standards for academic growth, proficiency, and college and career readiness.	Requiring Assistance or Intervention	
	5. Program delivery: The school delivers an academic program that delivers improved academic outcomes and educational success for all students.	Curriculum	● Partially Meets
		Instruction	● Meets
		Assessment and program evaluation	● Meets
		Diverse learners	● Meets
	6. Culture and family engagement: The school supports students’ social and emotional health in a safe and respectful learning environment that engages families.	Social, emotional, and health needs	● Meets
Family and community engagement			
Organizational viability	7. Capacity: The school sustains a well-functioning organizational structure and creates a professional working climate for all staff.	School leadership	● Meets
		Professional climate	● Meets
		Contractual relationships	● Meets
	8. Governance: The Board of Trustees act as public agents authorized by the state and provide competent governance to ensure the success and sustainability of the school.		● Meets
	9. Finance: The school maintains a sound and stable financial condition that operates in a fiscally responsible and publicly accountable manner.		● Partially Meets

¹⁶ Rating Key:

- **Exceeds:** The school fully and consistently meets the criterion and is a potential exemplar in this area.
- **Meets:** The school generally meets the criterion and/or minor concern(s) are noted.
- **Partially Meets:** The school meets some aspects of the criterion but not others and/or moderate concern(s) are noted.
- **Falls Far Below:** The school falls far below the criterion and/or significant concerns are noted.

¹⁷ Due to the number of items required for a CMVS to be in compliance with state and federal regulations and guidance, the Department does not rate this category.

Recommendation

Pursuant to the regulations for Commonwealth of Massachusetts Virtual Schools at 603 CMR 52.11 and 52.12(1), I recommend that the Board renew the certificate for TECCA for four years with three conditions. While TECCA previously met the two conditions imposed on its certificate, concerns remain regarding its poor academic outcomes;¹⁸ the delivery of its academic program;¹⁹ and repeated findings of significant deficiencies or material weaknesses in its financial audits, which the school has submitted after the required deadline of January 1.²⁰ These are further detailed in the attached Summary of Review.

I recommend that the Board renew the school's certificate for four years and impose the conditions that follow.

1. By August 1, 2022, TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School must develop four-year goals for non-statewide assessments in its Accountability Plan that will allow the school to demonstrate a track record of academic success during the certificate term.
2. By January 1, 2023, the board of TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School must ensure a timely submission of its annual financial audit; the fiscal year 2022 audit must demonstrate progress or full resolution of findings outlined in prior audits.
3. By December 31, 2024, the school must demonstrate that it is an academic success by providing evidence that the school has exhibited significant and sustained academic improvement in mathematics, English language arts, and science for all student subgroups.

In addition to meeting the terms of the conditions, TECCA must comply with the terms of its certificate. Failure to meet these conditions may result in the Board placing the school on probation, revoking its certificate, or imposing additional conditions on its certificate.

I am not seeking to adjust the maximum enrollment levels granted to either CMVS at this time. GCVS and TECCA continue to have large waitlists of students seeking entry, some of whom are medically vulnerable. I will reassess appropriate maximum enrollment levels in the future.

I look forward to further discussions with the Board regarding the Commonwealth's publicly funded virtual schools. If you have any questions regarding these recommendations or require additional information, please contact Alison Bagg, director, Office of Charter Schools and School Redesign (781-338-3218); Cliff Chuang, senior associate commissioner (781-338-3222); or me.

¹⁸ TECCA's performance on a majority of student performance data elements, such as achievement rates, growth scores, and graduation rates, has been consistently below state rates during the certificate term. Student achievement rates in 2021 for grades 3 through 8, when these students took modified and virtual MCAS examinations, were above the statewide average. Dropout rates also have been consistently above state rates. In its application for renewal, TECCA provided evidence that student performance on the SAT and AP exams had improved during the certificate term.

¹⁹ TECCA continues to work with its contractor, CE, to improve the content and implementation of its academic offerings. The school's current curriculum, however, is only somewhat aligned to Massachusetts curriculum frameworks and expectations.

²⁰ During the certificate term, TECCA has partially met the standard for maintaining sound and stable finances. During every year of the certificate term, the school's financial audit has contained findings of significant deficiencies or material weaknesses noting a lack of internal controls sufficient to ensure accurate and complete financial reporting.

Attachments:

Motions

[Tab A: GCVS Summary of Review and Terms of Certificate](#)

[Tab B: TECCA Summary of Review and Terms of Certificate](#)

Tab A: GCVS Summary of Review and Terms of Certificate



GREATER COMMONWEALTH VIRTUAL SCHOOL

SUMMARY OF REVIEW

Greenfield, MA
March 2022

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ABOUT COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS VIRTUAL SCHOOL RENEWAL AND SUMMARY OF REVIEW

According to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Virtual Schools (CMVS) [regulations](#) (603 CMR 52.00), the decision of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) to renew the certificate of a virtual school “shall be based upon the presentation of affirmative evidence regarding the faithfulness of the virtual school to the terms of its certificate, the virtual school’s academic program, and the viability of the virtual school as an organization.” This Summary of Renewal Review (SOR) provides ratings and findings related to the performance of the Greater Commonwealth Virtual School (GCVS) in these areas, as outlined in the CMVS Performance Criteria.

Sources of information and data for this SOR included (but were not limited to) the absolute performance of the CMVS at the time of its renewal application, its progress over the three years of its third certificate term (2019-2022), annual reports, financial audits, assessment results, accountability review reports, renewal application, and the November 2021 Renewal Inspection Report.

SCHOOL OVERVIEW

SCHOOL PROFILE

Greater Commonwealth Virtual School (GCVS) <i>(formerly known as Greenfield Commonwealth Virtual School)</i>			
Year Opened	July 1, 2013	Current Age of School	9
Maximum Enrollment	1,200	Current Grade Span	K-12
Current Enrollment	1,030 ²¹	Year(s) Renewed	2016, 2019
Students on Waitlist	731 ²²	Location of Administrative Offices	238 Main Street 3rd Floor Greenfield, MA 01301
Mission Statement: The Greater Commonwealth Virtual School, a public school of choice, serves students from across Massachusetts who need a learning community that is accessible and flexible. We give our students and their families choices in what, how, when, and where they learn. As a pioneer of online personalized learning, we empower our educators to tailor learning experiences to each student’s strengths, interests, and challenges. We redefine and change how students and			

²¹ This is the number as of October 1, 2021. Source: [Profiles](#)

²² This is the number as of November 15, 2021. Source: GCVS enrollment update submitted to the Department prior to the renewal inspection

teachers engage through innovative technology, while ensuring mastery of competencies embedded in a rigorous curriculum.

SCHOOL HISTORY

- Greater Commonwealth Virtual School (GCVS), formerly Greenfield Commonwealth Virtual School (GCVS), first opened in 2010 as the Massachusetts Virtual Academy of Greenfield (MAVA) under the innovation school law (G.L.c.71, § 92). On January 2, 2013, Governor Patrick signed into law Chapter 379 of the Acts of 2012, “An Act Establishing Commonwealth Virtual Schools” (Act), most of which is codified as G.L. c. 71, § 9423. By statute, MAVA ceased to exist on July 1, 2013. Section 6 of the Act required the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) to grant a certificate to operate a Commonwealth of Massachusetts Virtual School (CMVS) to MAVA upon submission of a timely application that addressed the information specified in the statute.
- GCVS received its certificate on June 25, 2013, and began operating as a CMVS on July 1, 2013, serving 750 students in grades K through 12.
- On June 2014, the Board voted to place GCVS on probation for the remainder of the school's certificate term (until June 30, 2016) with conditions requiring the school to: submit board of trustees minutes to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department); submit a final contract with K12, Inc.; align its curriculum with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks; submit a comprehensive evaluation of its academic program; submit an action plan outlining strategies to improve academic performance; and demonstrate significant academic improvement by 2015.
- In February 2016, the Board renewed the school’s certificate and extended the school’s probationary status. The probationary conditions required the school to: limit its maximum enrollment to 750 students for grades K through 12; submit board of trustees meeting materials; submit weekly student enrollment reports; submit projected budgets to meet requirement for enrolling at least 5 percent of students from Greenfield; submit a corrective action plan to ensure at least 95 percent of students and student groups participated in MCAS; establish an escrow account to pay for potential closure; and to demonstrate significant and sustained academic improvement by 2017.
- In October 2017, the Board approved an amendment for the school to terminate its contract with K12, Inc. and to adopt the Canvas learning management system by Instructure, Inc. The school adopted a new curriculum, including EngageNY (grades K through 5, English language arts, and mathematics), and Florida Virtual Schools Global (FLVS) (grades 6 through 12, all subjects).
- In January 2018, the commissioner approved an amendment for the school to amend its mission statement. In March 2018, the Board extended the school’s probationary status, maintained the prior probationary conditions, and added a new condition related to the provision of services for English learners.
- In March 2019, the Board removed the school from probation and renewed the school’s certificate with conditions requiring the school to: submit board of trustees meeting materials and weekly student enrollment reports; enroll a maximum of 750 students; provide the Department with updates on the implementation of its plan for serving English learners; submit a comprehensive evaluation of the school’s mathematics, English language arts, and science programs by 2019; submit a comprehensive action plan for improving academic performance and addressing other areas for improvement by 2019; and demonstrate academic success by providing evidence that the school has exhibited significant and sustained academic improvement in mathematics, English language arts, and science on the statewide assessment for all student subgroups by 2021.
- In June 2019, the GCVS teachers voted to join a union and are now an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). GCVS has negotiated the teachers’ contract with the AFT. In April 2021, the contract was ratified and signed by all teachers and the GCVS Board of Trustees.
- In October 2019, the commissioner approved a number of amendment requests to change elements of GCVS’ educational program by adding supports for students (an in-person support center for students who struggle to advance in the school’s academic program), adopting two new curricula (Accelerate Education for grades K-5 and Edgenuity for a 9-12 asynchronous program), and offering students dual enrollment at Greenfield Community College (GCC).

- In July 2020, the commissioner approved an amendment to change the school's curriculum for grades K through 5 from Accelerate Education to the newly released curriculum from FLVS for all subjects for synchronous programs. This change allowed the school to implement FLVS across all grades.
- In July 2020, the commissioner approved an amendment to increase the school's maximum enrollment by an additional 250 seats, for a new maximum enrollment of 1,000 until the end of the school's current certificate (June 30, 2022). This granting of additional seats was explicitly conditioned on GCVS demonstrating that its K-12 curriculum is fully aligned with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks by September 15, 2020. After a second request from GCVS, the maximum enrollment was amended again, in September 2020, with an increase of 50 additional seats, for a new maximum enrollment of 1,050 until the end of the current certificate.
- In December 2020, the Department conducted an Accountability Review of GCVS.
- In January 2021, the commissioner approved the school's request to report on a new accountability plan.
- In September 2021, the commissioner approved an amendment to change the school's name from Greenfield Commonwealth Virtual School to Greater Commonwealth Virtual School and to change the Learning Management System (LMS) from Canvas to Schoology.
- In February 2022, the commissioner approved the school's request to increase its maximum enrollment by an additional 150 seats, for a new maximum of 1,200 seats, in order to meet elevated demand for students who are unable to attend school in person because of a medical condition. That same month, the commissioner approved the school's request to amend its enrollment policy to provide the first order enrollment preference to students who are unable to attend school in-person because of a medical condition.
- The school has implemented leadership changes during the certificate term. In July 2019, GCVS created the position for and hired the family engagement coordinator. In August 2019, a vice principal for grades K through 5 was hired and in 2021 the vice principal's role was expanded to oversee grades K through 8. In September 2019, the asynchronous Edgenuity program director was hired. In June 2020 the responsibilities of the director of special education and student services position were split into two roles: the director of special education and the director of accountability and student services. In August 2020, a vice principal for grades 9 through 12 as hired. In December 2020, GCVS hired a new director of instructional technology. In August 2021, GCVS hired a new support center coordinator.
- The school's board of trustees oversees the executive director, who oversees the school administration. The school administration includes the director of business services, the director of teaching and learning (also referred to as the principal for grades K through 12), the flex program director (to oversee the asynchronous Edgenuity program), the director of information technology, the director of special education, the director of instructional technology, the director of accountability and support services, and the family engagement coordinator. The principal oversees the assistant principal for grades K through 8, the assistant principal for grades 9 through 12, and the guidance counselors. The principal and assistant principals share oversight of the general education teachers. The director of accountability and support services oversees English as a Second Language (ESL) and Title I teachers, and the director of special education oversees the special education teachers, the support center coordinator, and the school adjustment officer. The family engagement coordinator oversees the family engagement liaisons.

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity (2021-2022) ²⁴	
Race/Ethnicity	Percentage of Student Body
African American	7.3
Asian	5.6
Hispanic	20.5
Native American	0.2
White	58.4
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	0.3
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	7.7

Selected Populations (2021-2022) ²⁵	
Title	Percentage of Student Body
First Language not English	7.9
English Language Learner	1.7
Students with Disabilities	22.5
High Needs	66.0
Economically Disadvantaged	57.7

²⁴ As of October 1, 2021. Source: [Profiles](#)

²⁵ As of October 1, 2021. Source: [Profiles](#)

Greater Commonwealth Virtual School			
Guiding area	Criteria	Rating ²⁶	
Faithfulness to certificate	1. Mission and key design elements: The school is faithful to its mission, implements the key design elements outlined in its certificate, and substantially meets its accountability plan goals.	● Partially Meets	
	2. Access and equity: The school ensures program access and equity for all students eligible to attend the school.	● Partially Meets	
	3. Compliance: The school compiles a record of compliance with the terms of its certificate and applicable state and federal laws and regulations.	Not Rated ²⁷	
Academic and program success	4. Student performance: The school consistently meets state student performance standards for academic growth, proficiency, and college and career readiness.	Requiring Assistance or Intervention	
	5. Program delivery: The school delivers an academic program that delivers improved academic outcomes and educational success for all students.	Curriculum	● Partially Meets
		Instruction	● Meets
		Assessment and program evaluation	● Partially Meets
		Diverse learners	● Partially Meets
	6. Culture and family engagement: The school supports students' social and emotional health in a safe and respectful learning environment that engages families.	Social, emotional, and health needs	● Meets
Family and community engagement			
Organizational viability	7. Capacity: The school sustains a well-functioning organizational structure and creates a professional working climate for all staff.	School leadership	● Partially Meets
		Professional climate	● Meets
		Contractual relationships	N/A
	8. Governance: The Board of Trustees act as public agents authorized by the state and provide competent governance to ensure the success and sustainability of the school.	● Partially Meets	
	9. Finance: The school maintains a sound and stable financial condition that operates in a fiscally responsible and publicly accountable manner.	● Meets	

26 Rating Key:

- **Exceeds:** The school fully and consistently meets the criterion and is a potential exemplar in this area.
- **Meets:** The school generally meets the criterion and/or minor concern(s) are noted.
- **Partially Meets:** The school meets some aspects of the criterion but not others and/or moderate concern(s) are noted.
- **Falls Far Below:** The school falls far below the criterion and/or significant concerns are noted.

27 Due to the number of items required for a public CMVS to be in compliance with state and federal regulations and guidance, the Department does not rate this category as a composite.

FINDINGS AND EVIDENCE

FAITHFULNESS TO CERTIFICATE

Criterion 1: Mission and Key Design Elements	
<i>Finding: While GCVS operates in a manner that is faithful to its mission, the school has not delivered a program or results that fully meet the promises of its mission. GCVS did not meet a majority of its Accountability Plan goals.</i>	● Partially Meets

GCVS’s mission statement outlines the provision of an accessible, flexible, personalized education through innovative technology and a rigorous curriculum that ensures mastery. During the renewal inspection visit, stakeholder groups consistently expressed a collective understanding of GCVS’s mission. As noted in the November 2021 Renewal Inspection Report, the Department found that GCVS has partially met its mission. GCVS provides synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities, academic supports, as well as dual enrollment courses in partnership with Greenfield Community College. Concerns documented during the certificate term demonstrate that there is still work to be done for the school to deliver an accessible and flexible program, provide a rigorous and aligned curriculum, and improve persistently low academic results from statewide assessments. In the school’s ninth year, GCVS was newly implementing its third LMS, Schoology and holding live lessons via Zoom. Since its founding, GCVS has based its academic program on a number of curricula; currently, GCVS implements Florida Virtual School curriculum grades K through 12 and Edgenuity for its grades 6 through 12 “flex” asynchronous program.

In December 2020, the Department provisionally approved GCVS’s request to replace its existing Accountability Plan with a new Accountability Plan. In February 2021, the Commissioner approved the new Accountability Plan. GCVS’s Accountability Plan includes 4 objectives and 15 related measures. GCVS met 3 of 15 measures in 2020-2021.

Sources: Renewal Inspection Report (November 2021), Accountability Review (December 2020), Certificate Renewal Application (June 2021), FY2020 and FY2021 Annual Reports

Criterion 2: Access and Equity	
<i>Finding: Throughout the certificate term, GCVS has not fully ensured program access and equity for all students eligible to attend the school.</i>	● Partially Meets

As noted in the Renewal Inspection Report, GCVS provides sufficient information to the public regarding non-discriminatory enrollment practices and the availability of specialized programs and services at the school to meet the needs of students with disabilities and English learners (ELs). The school’s website and student handbook provide information regarding the school’s non-discriminatory enrollment practices. The school’s website provides a description of special education and English Language

Education resources and supports available for students. The school’s website, including enrollment pages and some recruitment materials, can be translated into multiple languages.

As of October 1, 2021, GCVS enrolled 1,030 students and had a waitlist of over 700 students. GCVS has consistently enrolled percentages of students with disabilities at rates slightly higher than statewide averages. GCVS has consistently enrolled a percentage of students who are economically disadvantaged/low-income at rates higher than statewide averages. GCVS has always enrolled a population of ELs far below state averages. Over the past five years, GCVS attrition rates decreased for all students and for high needs students (with 2021 showing the largest decrease); the school’s stability rates slightly improved. While improved, GCVS’s attrition rates are far above and stability rates far below statewide averages.

GCVS provides some supports to allow students to have technological and material access to the educational program. The school provides some materials for all students to be successful in online learning, including Chromebooks, internet hotspots, information on discounted internet providers, hard copies of textbooks, and additional printed course materials and supplies. The school provides reimbursements for internet connectivity for families that meet requirements for free or reduced-price lunch. At the time of the renewal inspection, GCVS did not have curriculum materials for all ELs, nor did it conduct initial assessments of incoming students or systematic screenings for entering Kindergarten students.

Sources: *Renewal Inspection Report (November 2021)*, *Accountability Review (December 2020)*, GCVS’s [website](#), GCVS’s [School Profile](#)

Criterion 3: Compliance

<i>Finding: GCVS has not compiled a strong record of compliance with applicable state and federal laws and regulations or Department guidance.</i>
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GCVS is not fully operating in compliance with program requirements as determined by Tiered Focused Monitoring (TFM) Reviews.

The Department’s [Office of Public School Monitoring](#) conducted a Tier 3 TFM review at GCVS in April 2021. Tier 3 reviews are conducted at schools where data points indicate moderate concerns for compliance and performance outcomes. The outcome of the visit was zero findings in special education and zero findings in civil rights.

The Department’s [Office of Language Acquisition](#) conducted a TFM review at GCVS in November 2020. The outcome of the visit was three findings in English language education. As of February 2022, GCVS has not fully met progress reporting requirements pertaining to the two of the three findings. Particularly, GCVS has not made progress in effectively identifying an appropriate ESL curriculum or implemented a plan to provide translation services to families.

GCVS is operating in compliance with legal requirements to employ licensed teachers.

- Faculty hold appropriate licensure, teach in their field, or teach under a waiver pursuant to G.L.c 71, section 38G.

The board of trustees operates in a manner that is not fully in compliance with the Open Meeting Law (OML). Additionally, in August 2021, the board of trustees voted on a special education matter in a manner that did not take into account the legal obligations of the school.

- Board meeting minutes do not provide a sufficient summary of the discussion, as required by OML.

- As confirmed by board meeting minutes and documentation from the Department’s Problem Resolution System Office, on August 9, 2021, the GCVS board voted to discontinue its substantially separate special education program, effective July 1, 2022, after one presentation by the special education director and without record of board discussion or analysis leading to the decision. On September 29, 2021, Department staff and legal counsel met with GCVS’ leadership and legal counsel to discuss the potential implications of the decision, and on October 18, 2021, the board rescinded the vote to discontinue GCVS’ substantially separate special education program.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM SUCCESS

Criterion 4: Student Performance²⁸		
<i>Finding: Over its third, three-year certificate term, GCVS has not met state student performance standards for academic growth, proficiency, or college and career readiness.</i>	2019 Overall Classification:	Requiring Assistance or Intervention
	Cumulative Progress Toward Improvement Targets:	35%
	2019 Accountability Percentile:	4

In 2017, schools such as GCVS that administered the Next-Generation MCAS assessment in grades 3 through 8 were not assigned a classification. In 2018, GCVS partially met targets for indicators included in the new statewide accountability system. The reason for GCVS’ 2018 classification, requiring assistance or intervention, is the school’s low graduation rate and low participation rate, especially for students with disabilities. In 2019, GCVS made moderate progress toward targets. The reasons for GCVS’ 2019 classification, requiring assistance and intervention, are that the school is among the lowest performing 10 percent of schools, has low graduation rates, and has low participation rates, especially for students with disabilities.

A majority of student performance data, such as achievement rates, growth scores, and graduation rates have been consistently below state rates during the certificate term. Dropout rates have been consistently above state rates as well. GCVS did not provide additional, affirmative evidence of academic success within its Application for Renewal.

Sources: [2019 Accountability Report](#)

²⁸ The school’s most recent student performance data in the statewide accountability system is for 2019. Statewide assessments were not administered in 2020.

Key Indicator 5.1: Curriculum	
<i>Finding: GCVS’s documented curriculum is somewhat aligned to state curriculum frameworks and expectations. The curriculum somewhat supports opportunities for all students to master skills and concepts. The curriculum is reviewed and revised to ensure quality and effectiveness.</i>	● Partially Meets

Since its July 2017 separation from K12 Inc. (the former, contracted provider of the educational program and LMS), GCVS has implemented multiple LMS (Canvas, Schoology) and curricula (Engage NY, Accelerate Education, FLVS, and Edgenuity). Currently, GCVS uses Schoology and Zoom to deliver a grade K through 12 Florida Virtual Schools (FLVS) curriculum. Additionally, GCVS implements Edgenuity for its grade 6 through 12 “flex” asynchronous program.

During the December 2020 Accountability Review and November 2021 Renewal Inspection, the Department found that GCVS’s documented curriculum is somewhat aligned to Massachusetts curriculum frameworks and expectations. The school has made progress in identifying alignment gaps between the curriculum and the frameworks through teacher-led collaboration. The school is working toward horizontal and vertical alignment in the school’s documented curriculum. The school’s documented curriculum and supplemental lessons and materials somewhat support opportunities for most students to master skills and concepts; though the school lacks an comprehensive ESL curriculum. The curriculum is regularly reviewed and revised to improve its quality and effectiveness through professional learning community groups. During the current school year, teachers and administrators are still adapting the newly chosen LMS.

Sources: Renewal Inspection Report (November 2021), Accountability Reviews (December 2020), Certificate Renewal Application (June 2021)

Key Indicator 5.2: Instruction	
<i>Finding: During the renewal inspection, observed instructional practices were somewhat aligned to the school’s expectations. Observed instruction fostered student engagement and created supportive learning environments.</i>	● Meets

A majority of GCVS students in grades K through 12 engage in live lessons: elementary students receive daily full-class and small group live instruction; middle school students receive five live lessons a week in each core academic subject; and high school students receive live lessons 2-3 times a week in each subject area. Students who participate in GCVS’s “flex” program take Edgenuity courses; an entirely asynchronous program of study.

During the renewal inspection, teachers and administrators defined high quality instruction in ways that reflected a common understanding. However, instructional practices aligned to the school’s definition of high-quality instruction were seen in half of the observed live lessons. Observations conducted as part of the renewal inspection noted improvements over prior years in the degree to which instruction fostered student engagement and learning environments were conducive to learning. During the renewal

inspection, observed instruction fostered student engagement in a majority of live lessons. Likewise, observations conducted during the renewal inspection noted improvements in the degree to which environments were conducive to learning; nearly all observed lessons were respectful, positive, and well-planned.

Sources: *Renewal Inspection Report (November 2021), Certificate Renewal Application (June 2021)*

Key Indicator 5.3: Assessment & Program Evaluation	
<i>Finding: The school implements formative, summative, and benchmark assessments. While GCVS uses some data to modify instruction and to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the program, there is little use of assessment data to improve student outcomes.</i>	● Partially Meets

As noted in the Renewal Inspection Report, during the certificate term GCVS has implemented assessments such as teacher administered quizzes or tests; Fountas & Pinnell thrice yearly benchmark assessments; as well as Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) and ACCESS testing. In 2020-2021, GCVS also began administering the Star Renaissance mathematics and English language arts assessments four times a year. The school has some systems and structures in place for appropriate test proctoring.

Evidence gathered during the renewal inspection, as well as stated in the Renewal Application, points to the fact that the school is not effectively using data to improve student outcomes. Teachers, administrators, and board members use some quantitative and qualitative data (such as MCAS data and student surveys) to modify instruction or to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the program; GCVS has recently hired a consultant and implemented specific professional development to better train teachers in the effective use of data.

Sources: *Renewal Inspection Report (November 2021), Accountability Review (December 2020), Certificate Renewal Application (June 2021)*

Key Indicator 5.4: Diverse Learners	
<i>Finding: The school provides supports to meet the academic needs for most students but provides limited supports for English learners. The school implements a tiered support model that addresses the academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs of most students.</i>	● Partially Meets

In its third certificate term, GCVS provides supports to meet the academic needs for most diverse learners. While improved compared to prior certificate terms, the 2020 Accountability Review and 2021 Renewal Inspection Report documented limited supports for English learners (ELs) including a lack of curricula as well as few observed instructional supports such as explicit teaching and practice of academic language. GCVS does have supports in place to meet the needs of other groups of diverse learners. The school has increased its special education staffing levels, implemented a multi-tiered

system of supports (MTSS), and added new technological resources to support students’ academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs. The school has recently shifted from a response to intervention model to a MTSS model, evidence from the renewal inspection demonstrates that the school has not yet fully defined all aspects of the model, particularly academic or social-emotional interventions provided to students who continue to struggle.

Sources: Renewal Inspection Report (November 2021), Accountability Review (December 2020), Certificate Renewal Application (June 2021)

Criterion 6: Culture and Family Engagement	
<i>Finding: GCVS has consistently supported students’ social and emotional health in a safe and respectful learning environment that engaged families.</i>	● Meets

During the renewal inspection, the Department found that GCVS creates a safe learning environment and addresses the physical, social, emotional, and health needs of its students by providing school guidance counselors and other professionals to work with students and families. GCVS also provides specific programming that addresses the physical, social, emotional, and health needs of students through course provision (such as physical education), social supports through anti-bullying assemblies, clubs, and monthly high school meetings focused on social, emotional, and health topics, social emotional learning (SEL) through monthly grade level seminars, extracurricular clubs, e-sport teams, and field trips (virtual during COVID), and policies and training about age-appropriate internet safety.

The school has structures that result in a respectful learning environment, including Acceptable Use policies that outline appropriate online behavior for students as well as technology guards for ways to monitor student browsing habits and interactions. A majority of observed instruction observed during the 2021 renewal inspection was characterized by clear routines, respectful speech, tone, and relationships.

The school develops and maintains strong working partnerships and frequent communication with families in order to support students’ academic progress and social and emotional well-being. Families reported the school prepared and supported students and families through the transition to the new LMS (Schoology). Families also reported that the school provides multiple forms of communication, information, supports for learning coaches, training, and resources throughout the school year including monthly or weekly support sessions, as needed.

Sources: Renewal Inspection Report (November 2021), Certificate Renewal Application (June 2021)

ORGANIZATIONAL VIABILITY

Key Indicator 7.1: School Leadership	
<i>Finding: During the certificate term, GCVS stabilized and grew its leadership team. The school is working toward defining and delineating roles and responsibilities among leaders, staff, management, and board of trustees' members as well as implementing a clearly defined set of goals.</i>	● Partially Meets

During the prior certificate term (2016-2019), GCVS experienced high turnover of its senior administrative team. Since the hire of the current executive director in November 2018, GCVS's senior administrative team has stabilized. Over the past two years, GCVS has added a number of new positions to the administrative team. While GCVS has structures to define and delineate roles and responsibilities among administrators, staff, and board of trustee members, evidence from the 2020 Accountability Review and 2021 Renewal Inspection found that these roles are not always clear to all staff members; the school has hired a consultant to create better role clarity. The 2020 accountability review report noted that the school's leadership team was implementing a clearly defined mission and set of goals, aligned to the school's 2019 action plan which was developed according to conditions imposed during the last renewal. As of the November 2021 renewal inspection, school staff had not substantially engaged in the administration's goal to improve the use of quantitative data. Additionally, as documented in the November 2021 Renewal Inspection Report, GCVS implements some systems for decision-making and communication processes among all members of the school community, but this area remains a work in progress.

Sources: Renewal Inspection Report (November 2021), Accountability Review (January 2021), Certificate Renewal Application (June 2021)

Key Indicator 7.2 Professional Climate	
<i>Finding: During its third certificate term, GCVS has maintained a professional working climate for staff.</i>	● Meets

Throughout the certificate term, the Department found that GCVS teachers engage in regular, frequent collaboration and professional development (PD) to improve implementation of the curriculum and instructional practice. GCVS provides multiple structures for teacher collaboration and professional development such as, dedicated training on topics, teacher led professional learning community (PLC) groups, external courses from universities, and a newly implemented teacher mentorship program. Teachers also reported ample training and support for GCVS's transition to the new LMS (Schoology).

As noted in the 2020 Accountability Review and 2021 Renewal Inspection, GCVS has an objective and transparent system in place for monitoring individual staff performance against established expectations. The system is based on the Massachusetts Model System for Educator Evaluation and includes a formal process of evaluation for all employees, including teachers. The school, however, has not tailored the evaluation rubric to online teaching expectations.

The organizational structure indicates appropriate staffing levels, including appropriate student to teacher ratios at various grade levels and content areas. As noted above, all teaching staff are licensed as required by law.

Sources: Renewal Inspection Report (November 2021), Accountability Review (January 2021), Certificate Renewal Application (June 2021)

Criterion 8: Governance	
<i>Finding: Members of the GCVS board of trustees act as public agents authorized by the state and somewhat provide competent and appropriate governance of the school.</i>	● Partially Meets

GCVS is governed by a seven-member board of trustees, two of whom were recently appointed. Board membership conforms with bylaws; the board meets monthly. During the 2019-2020 school year, board membership consisted of four individuals, below the five specified in GCVS’s bylaws and below the level (five) required by regulation.

The board fulfills some of its legal and fiduciary responsibilities. Meeting minutes for the full board and subcommittees are maintained and as noted in Criterion 3: Compliance above, board meeting minutes mostly conform with requirements of the Open Meeting Law. The board discusses and approves school policies throughout the school year. However, in August 2021, the board voted on a special education matter in a way that did not fulfill its fiduciary duties; the board later rescinded its vote. The board somewhat demonstrates appropriate oversight of the school leader and the school’s progress toward meeting academic goals, with limited evidence recorded in meeting minutes of discussions related to either of these oversight obligations. Evidence gathered during the renewal inspection demonstrates that the board provides oversight of the school’s financial health via monthly financial reports; fiscal year 2019 (FY2019) audit findings were remedied in subsequent years, and all subsequent financial audits have been free of findings, as noted below.

The board has a clear and well-understood system for communication processes within the board itself and between board members and the school community. Key school staff, such as the executive director and business manager, attend monthly board meetings to provide reports on school events, policy issues, and monthly financials. The board has a clear and well-understood system for decision-making processes. Board meeting minutes include mixed evidence that meetings foster open, deliberate, and thorough discussions; board meeting minutes do not consistently include a sufficient summary of board discussion. Board members reported, and board meeting minutes confirm, that the board engages in governance tasks rather than management of day-to-day operations at the school.

During the certificate term, the board has engaged in some strategic and continuous improvement planning. The board does not have its own strategic plan that sets or monitors long-term priorities or goals for the school, but the administration creates multi-year plans for school improvement. Language within the executive director’s contract and the board’s bylaws outline some plans for leader and board member succession. While there are no formal processes to recruit new board members, two new members have just joined and there are presentations and formal trainings offered to those new members.

Sources: *Renewal Inspection Report (November 2021), Accountability Review (January 2021), Certificate Renewal Application (June 2021); Financial Audits*

Criterion 9: Finance	
<i>Finding: GCVS has maintained a sound and stable financial condition over the past two years.</i>	● Meets

During the certificate term, GCVS has maintained sound and stable finances. While the school’s fiscal year 2019 (FY2019) audit had findings of Material Weakness, Significant Deficiency, and Instances of Noncompliance under GAAS, all were resolved by FY2020. In FY2020 and FY2021, the school’s financial audits were free of findings. For the past two fiscal years (FY2020 and FY2021), GCVS incurred a net income of \$559,790 and \$1,971,271 respectively, mainly due to an increase in enrollment and grant allocations.

Sources: *FY2020 and FY2021 Financial Audits, Financial Dashboard*

SCHOOL'S RESPONSE TO SUMMARY OF REVIEW



GREATER COMMONWEALTH VIRTUAL SCHOOL

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Board of Education and
Commissioner Jeffrey C. Riley
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148

March 1, 2022

Dear Board Members and Commissioner Riley,

As preparations are made to gather information for your review in consideration of the renewal of the certificate for GCVS, on behalf of the entire GCVS community, I wish to express our gratitude for the opportunity to be a part of that process. I also wish to extend our thanks to many at DESE and particularly those at the office of Charter Schools and School Redesign who have and continue to extend their support to GCVS in educating some of the children of the Commonwealth.

As you review this material, I respectfully draw your attention to our response to the Renewal Inspection Report (RIR) attached to the report, which should help add some context.

As of today, GCVS has 1,124 fully registered students, and 47 accepted students waiting to complete their registration, while another 309 students are on the waiting list. These students are spread on a very wide spectrum. Some are very advanced and seek individual challenges they cannot find at their home school districts while others have fallen several grades behind. Irrespective of their individual academic performances, all these students share one common trait. They strongly feel that they can no longer fit in their home school districts. GCVS with its unique live classes complemented by its hybrid and asynchronous programs offer them the only solution and hope for a K-12 education. While this solution is far from being perfect, we will continue to work with our partners and use cutting-edge practices and technologies to realize improvements and grow educational opportunities for our students. Virtual schooling is evolving not only here in the Commonwealth, but across the country as well.

As some of our colleagues in other districts are witnessing with their new single district virtual schools (SDVS), the challenges are many. These past two years the pandemic made them worse. We are confident as schools return to normalcy, the collaboration amongst SDVS, CMVS, DESE, and other partners will succeed in carving out a successful role and place for virtual education for those students who would benefit from it.

Not unlike our brick-and-mortar colleagues, we at GCVS also believe that students will generally be better served with in-person schooling, where they can enjoy and learn from several valuable non-academic experiences. We believe that a key measure of success is enabling our students with the ability and confidence to successfully return to their home school districts. However, until they do so, GCVS will remain a caring, safe, and nurturing place for them to learn at their pace. For the other students who prefer to complete their k-12 education virtually, GCVS will continue to strive to provide them with effective paths for a successful life beyond high school.

We look forward to the Board of Education meeting to discuss the renewal of our certificate. We will be happy to answer any question or need for clarification you might have either at the meeting or before.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Salah E. Khelfaoui", is written over a horizontal line.

Pioneering Personalized Education in Massachusetts

GCVS does not discriminate on the basis of race, age, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, gender identity, disabilities, sexual orientation or any other protected class under the law.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Virtual School Terms of Certificate

1. Name:

Greater Commonwealth Virtual School (GCVS)

On September 29, 2021, the Commissioner approved a school name amendment from Greenfield Commonwealth Virtual School to Greater Commonwealth Virtual School.

2. Board of trustees:

John Lunt
Douglas Wilkins
Fernando Fleury
Jennifer Reynolds
Donovan Stevens
Crystal Pimental
Devan Sheehan

Members of the boards of trustees of Commonwealth of Massachusetts virtual schools may not be paid for attendance at board meetings but may receive reimbursement of reasonable expenses.

3. Term of certificate:

July 1, 2019, through June 30, 2022

Note: The [2019 renewal of GCVS' certificate was explicitly conditioned](#). Failure to meet the conditions may result in the Board placing GCVS on probation, revoking its certificate, or imposing additional conditions on its certificate.

4. Annual per pupil tuition rate:

In fiscal year 2022, tuition will be eight thousand, eight hundred and sixty-three dollars with \$75 per pupil retained by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for administration of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts virtual schools' program. (GCVS will receive \$8,788 per pupil.) The cost of special education services shall be calculated in accordance with 603 CMR 10.07(3) and shall be added to the per pupil tuition amount unless such services are provided in kind by the sending district.

GCVS may provide courses to public school districts for a fee, pursuant to G.L. c. 71, § 94 (2) (b) and (k) and 603 CMR 52.05(12).

5. Maximum enrollment and grade levels:

The maximum enrollment was amended, on February 10, 2022 with an increase of 150 additional seats, for a new maximum enrollment of 1,200. .

Students must be 5 by September 1st of the year of enrollment.

Grades	Enrollment
K-12	1,200

6. Enrollment region:

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

7. Mission, purpose, and specialized focus:

The mission was amended in March 2018.

“The Greater Commonwealth Virtual School, a public school of choice, serves students from across Massachusetts who need a learning community that is accessible and flexible. We give our students and their families choices in what, how, when, and where they learn.

As a pioneer of online personalized learning, we empower our educators to tailor learning experiences to each student’s strengths, interests, and challenges. We redefine and change how students and teachers engage through innovative technology, while ensuring mastery of competencies embedded in a rigorous curriculum.”

8. Educational program, instructional methodology, and services for students:

In October 2019, the Greater Commonwealth Virtual School amended its educational program to provide mastery-learning aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and Common Core Standards. The school delivers lessons in diverse ways to accommodate various learning styles and needs. The school uses the following instructional methods:

- Personalized Learning Plans;
- A Learning Coach to facilitate daily lessons and supervise and support students;
- Computer and printer technology to enable learning anytime, anywhere;
- Software Management Programs to give students and parents daily information about work to be accomplished and quality of work accomplished;
- Daily lesson plans, announcements, online school discussions, communication, and support tools;
- Lectures and Discussions using both small group and synchronous learning forums;
- Asynchronous programs to allow students to learn anytime
- Online classrooms for interaction between faculty and students and cooperative learning opportunities for students to work together on a structured project;
- Inquiry-based learning, including learning labs and experiments; and
- Demonstrations and simulations using synchronous and asynchronous classroom and video instruction.

- Advanced high students will be given the opportunity to participate in college dual enrollment programs at no additional cost to the student or his/her family
- Select number of Students with disabilities will have the opportunity to attend a support center for face-to-face support services.

For grades kindergarten through 8, the curriculum will use formative assessments to track progress and inform instruction. The school will offer high school students a broad selection of courses, including electives, to enable students to meet graduation requirements and prepare for college and a career. The school will offer mathematics, English language arts, science, and history courses at different skill levels, including Advanced Placement. The school also will offer three years of foreign language for high school students. All high school students will be offered courses sufficient to meet MassCore requirements.

To assure students are fully engaged in learning with a home-coach requires teachers to communicate regularly with parents via live synchronous sessions, email, and scheduled telephone conferences. Communications will occur as needed and at least twice monthly. Parents will review student assessment results and engage in discussion of interventions available to students.

The school will provide opportunities for students to develop socially including but not limited to:

- social gatherings or activities provided regionally or statewide, including back-to-school picnics and academic field trips, designed to enhance the curriculum and targeted toward specific grades;
- school clubs in person and online for group activities;
- informing students and parents of resources available in their communities;
- parent gatherings;
- a lecture series on topics of interest and importance to students including drugs, alcohol, emotional and physical health, personal safety, interventions; and
- encouraging students to participate in community health, sport, and fitness programs.

The school will offer extra-curricular activities through online forums and physical outings.

9. Governance and bylaws:

The bylaws were last amended on October 16, 2017 (See Appendix A). A board of trustees of five to seven members. If changes are proposed to the bylaws, the board of trustees of the Greater Commonwealth Virtual School will submit any amendments to its bylaws for the Department's approval in accordance with the regulations for Commonwealth of Massachusetts Virtual Schools, 603 CMR 52.00.

10. Proposed school year:

Late August or early September through June, with a minimum of 180 days, a minimum of 990 hours for grades 6-12, and a minimum of 900 hours for grades k-5.

11. Enrollment policy and preferences:

The Greater Commonwealth Virtual School enrollment policy was last amended on December 21, 2020. (See Appendix B) The enrollment policy outlines the following enrollment preference to:

1. Students who are unable to attend school in-person because of the student's medical condition
2. Students who are out of school due to bullying or other safety concerns
3. Students with disabilities
4. Students out of school due to pregnancy or parenting
5. Students who seek an advanced coursework not available in their current school
6. Students in training for competitive arts or sports whose schedules prevent them from attending school on a regular basis.
7. Students of currently enrolled siblings

If more applicants are received than the commonwealth virtual school can admit within its enrollment limit, the Greater Commonwealth Virtual School will admit students with an enrollment preference in the order of priority listed above and then will conduct an admissions lottery through using the GCVS electronic enrollment platform. Students who do not receive an offer of admission will be placed on a waitlist. If changes are proposed to the enrollment policy, the Greater Commonwealth Virtual School will submit an enrollment policy, procedure, and application to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for review and approval, such approval to have been received prior to admission of any students.

12. The identity of third party software or curriculum vendor partnerships:

On September 29, 2021, the Greater Commonwealth Virtual School amended its learning management system from Canvas by Instructure, Inc. to Schoology. In grades K-5, per an amendment approved by the Commissioner in July 2020, the school will use the newly released curriculum from Florida Virtual Schools Global (FLVS) for all subjects for synchronous programs. This change will allow the school to implement FLVS across all grades. In grades 6-12, the school will continue to use curriculum from Florida Virtual Schools Global (FLVS) for all subjects for synchronous programs. In grades 6-12, the school will use curriculum from Edgenuity for all subjects for asynchronous programs.

13. Proposed contract with management/operational organization, including payments:

None.

14. Demonstration of capacity to support and store all critical data in compliance with state and federal law:

The Greater Commonwealth Virtual School uses PowerSchool and eSped to store all critical student data in compliance with state and federal law. The school has installed the Schools Interoperability Framework (SIF) client for PowerSchool, enabling secure transmission of data to the Department.

Conditions on the Certificate

The 2019 renewal of the GCVS' certificate is explicitly conditioned as follows. Failure to meet these conditions may result in the Board placing GCVS on probation, revoking its certificate, or imposing additional conditions on its certificate.

1. *Reporting Requirements:*
 - a. *Greenfield Commonwealth Virtual School must continue to submit to the Department, at virtualschools@doe.mass.edu, board meeting agendas and materials prior to each board meeting at the same time that these items are sent to the school's board members. Further, the school must submit to the Department the minutes of these proceedings as soon as the school's board approves them. The Department reserves the right to require the submission of additional information, such as quarterly or monthly financial statements, if board materials do not already include this information. The school must provide such additional information within two business days.*
 - b. *Greenfield Commonwealth Virtual School must continue to submit to the Department weekly student enrollment reports.*
2. *Greenfield Commonwealth Virtual School may enroll a maximum of 750 students.*
3. *Beginning April 1, 2019 and monthly thereafter, GCVS shall provide the Department with an update on the implementation of its plan for serving students who are English learners.*
4. *By June 30, 2019, GCVS must submit to the Department a comprehensive evaluation of the school's mathematics, English language arts, and science programs. Additionally, the comprehensive evaluation should address instruction, supports for all learners, and the degree to which all students have equitable access to the school's academic program. Such comprehensive evaluation must be conducted by an external consultant(s) acceptable to and approved in advance by the Department. The evaluation must be informed by disaggregated performance data from the statewide accountability system and aligned with the CMVS Performance Criteria.*
5. *By July 31, 2019, the school must submit to the Department for approval a comprehensive action plan (action plan) for improving academic performance and addressing other areas for improvement identified by the comprehensive evaluation. Such action plan must include a needs assessment aligned to the 2018 statewide accountability results for GCVS. The action plan must also specify the evidence-based strategies the school will use to improve performance in mathematics, English language arts, and science for all student subgroups. The plan should also include strategies to improve instruction, supports for all learners, and the degree to which all students have equitable access to the school's academic program. The action plan*

must set clear and specific implementation benchmarks, with a clear timetable and deadlines for completion of key tasks, sufficient to allow the school's board of trustees and the Department to monitor implementation. The school must provide evidence that it has shared its improvement plan with the school's community including, but not limited to, students, parents, and staff.

6. *By December 31, 2021, the school must demonstrate that it is an academic success by providing evidence that the school has exhibited significant and sustained academic improvement in mathematics, English language arts, and science on the statewide assessment for all student subgroups.*

Tab B: TECCA Summary of Review and Terms of Certificate



**TEC CONNECTIONS ACADEMY COMMONWEALTH OF
MASSACHUSETTS VIRTUAL SCHOOL**

SUMMARY OF REVIEW

East Walpole, MA
March 2022

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
75 Pleasant Street
Malden, MA 02148
Phone: (781) 338-3227
Fax: (781) 338-3220



This document was prepared by the
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Jeffrey C. Riley
Commissioner

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ABOUT COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS VIRTUAL SCHOOL RENEWAL AND SUMMARY OF REVIEW

According to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Virtual Schools (CMVS) [regulations](#) (603 CMR 52.00), the decision of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) to renew the certificate of a virtual school “shall be based upon the presentation of affirmative evidence regarding the faithfulness of the virtual school to the terms of its certificate, the virtual school’s academic program, and the viability of the virtual school as an organization.” This Summary of Renewal Review (SOR) provides ratings and findings related to the performance of the TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School (TECCA) in these areas, as outlined in the CMVS Performance Criteria.

Sources of information and data for this SOR included (but were not limited to) the absolute performance of the CMVS at the time of its renewal application, its performance over the five years of its third certificate term (2017-2022), annual reports, financial audits, state assessment results, accountability review reports, renewal application, and October 2021 Renewal Inspection Report.

SCHOOL OVERVIEW

SCHOOL PROFILE

TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School (TECCA)			
Date Opened	July 1, 2014	Current Age of School	8
Maximum Enrollment	3,000	Current Grade Span	K-12
Current Enrollment	2,686 ²⁹	Year(s) Renewed	2017
Students on Waitlist	1,150 ³⁰	Location of Administrative Offices	141 Mansion Drive Suite 300 East Walpole, MA 02032
Mission Statement: TEC Connections Academy will provide Massachusetts students a quality public school experience.			

SCHOOL HISTORY

- The Education Cooperative (TEC) as the “founder entity” submitted an application for a virtual certificate to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) in the spring of 2013; on February 25, 2014, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) approved a

²⁹ This is the number as of October 1, 2021. Source: [Profiles](#)

³⁰ This is the number as of November 5, 2021. Source: TECCA enrollment update submitted to the Department after the renewal inspection

three-year operating certificate for TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School (TECCA) under the state's virtual school legislation ([Chapter 379 of the Acts of 2012](#)).

- TECCA opened on July 1, 2014, serving 1,000 students in grades K through 12. The school expanded to its original maximum enrollment of 2,000 by the third year of its operation.
- In June and August 2014, the commissioner approved two amendment requests allowing the school to add three new board members to TECCA's board of trustees.
- In November 2015, the commissioner approved an amendment for the school to amend the financial and operational arrangement between TECCA and Connections Education (CE), the entity that provides the school with its learning management system (LMS), curriculum, and additional services as specified in the contract.
- In May 2016, the commissioner approved an amendment for the school to amend its board of trustees' bylaws.
- In September 2016, the commissioner approved an amendment for the school to amend its contract with CE regarding human resources management.
- In February 2017, the Board renewed the school's certificate for a five-year term (until June 20, 2022) with conditions requiring the school to submit a detailed plan for ensuring that not less than 95 percent of students participate in the Spring 2017 MCAS tests by March 2017 and submit a detailed plan for serving students who are English language learners by April 2017. TECCA met both conditions by the corresponding deadlines.
- In August 2018, the commissioner approved an amendment to increase the school's maximum enrollment from 2,000 to 2,300.
- In August 2018, the commissioner approved four additional amendment requests: to amend TECCA's contract with CE, to amend TECCA's mission statement and add two additional pathways (i.e., accelerated, extended programs), and to add a new board member to TECCA's board of trustees.
- In November 2019, the commissioner approved an amendment for the school to amend its contract with CE to include accounting (expense reporting, tracking, receivables, facilitating accounts payable excluding any payment to CE), audit support, and provision of Human Resources support during a time of administrative transition.
- In August 2020, the commissioner approved the school's request to increase its maximum enrollment by an additional 400 seats, for a new maximum of 2,700, in order to meet elevated demand for virtual programming due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- In August 2020, the commissioner approved an amendment for the school to amend its contract with CE in which CE provided leadership and strategic support to TECCA.
- In March 2020, TECCA teachers started negotiations to become an affiliate of the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA). In June 2020, TECCA staff voted to join the MTA and contract negotiations continued until September 2021. Negotiations are currently suspended and will recommence in January 2022.

- In January 2021, the Department conducted an Accountability Review of TECCA. The review team issued ratings in the areas of faithfulness to certificate, academic and program success, and organizational viability, the guiding principles of virtual school accountability.
- In February 2021, the commissioner approved the school's requests to amend the school's enrollment policy and to report on a new accountability plan.
- In October 2021, the commissioner approved the school's request to increase its maximum enrollment by an additional 300 seats, for a new maximum of 3,000, in order to meet elevated demand for students who are unable to attend school in person because of a medical condition. That same month, the commissioner approved the school's request to amend its enrollment policy to provide the first order enrollment preference to students who are unable to attend school in-person because of a medical condition.
- The school has implemented leadership changes during the certificate term. In January 2020, the interim superintendent created a leadership team including the director and assistant director of grades K through 5, director and assistant director of grades 6 through 12, dean of students, 504 coordinator, and registrar. In July 2020, the interim superintendent became TECCA's new superintendent, replacing the former superintendent who had served in the role since July 2015. In August 2021, the school restructured its leadership team at the elementary, middle, and high school to replace the director and assistant directors with an elementary school principal and assistant principal, middle school principal and assistant principal, and high school principal and assistant principal.
- The school's board of trustees oversees the superintendent, who oversees the district leadership team. The school district leadership team includes the business manager; human resources; executive assistant to administration; director of assessment, instruction, and professional development; director of school counseling services; director of special education; assistant director of special education; principal of elementary school; principal of middle school; and principal of high school. The superintendent and school principals share oversight of the general education teachers. The director of school counseling services oversees of the school's guidance counselors, family engagement coordinators, social workers, success coaches, and 504 coordinators. The director and assistant director of special education oversees special education teachers, school psychologists, virtual counselors, and team chairs.

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity (2021-2022)³¹	
Race/Ethnicity	Percentage of Student Body
African American	9.2
Asian	3.8
Hispanic	21.0
Native American	0.4
White	58.3
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	0.3
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	7.0

Selected Populations (2021-2022)³²	
Title	Percentage of Student Body
First Language not English	5.9
English Language Learner	1.4
Students with Disabilities	20.6
High Needs	62.8
Low Income	54.0

31 As of October 1, 2021. Source: [Profiles](#)

32 As of October 1, 2021. Source: [Profiles](#)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School			
Guiding area	Criteria	Rating ³³	
Faithfulness to certificate	10. Mission and key design elements: The school is faithful to its mission, implements the key design elements outlined in its certificate, and substantially meets its accountability plan goals.	● Partially Meets	
	11. Access and equity: The school ensures program access and equity for all students eligible to attend the school.	● Meets	
	12. Compliance: The school compiles a record of compliance with the terms of its certificate and applicable state and federal laws and regulations.	Not Rated ³⁴	
Academic and program success	13. Student performance: The school consistently meets state student performance standards for academic growth, proficiency, and college and career readiness.	Requiring Assistance or Intervention	
	14. Program delivery: The school delivers an academic program that delivers improved academic outcomes and educational success for all students.	Curriculum	● Partially Meets
		Instruction	● Meets
		Assessment and program evaluation	● Meets
		Diverse learners	● Meets
	15. Culture and family engagement: The school supports students' social and emotional health in a safe and respectful learning environment that engages families.	Social, emotional, and health needs	● Meets
		Family and community engagement	
Organizational viability	16. Capacity: The school sustains a well-functioning organizational structure and creates a professional working climate for all staff.	School leadership	● Meets
		Professional climate	● Meets
		Contractual relationships	● Meets
	17. Governance: The Board of Trustees act as public agents authorized by the state and provide competent governance to ensure the success and sustainability of the school.	● Meets	
	18. Finance: The school maintains a sound and stable financial condition that operates in a fiscally responsible and publicly accountable manner.	● Partially Meets	

³³ Rating Key:

- **Exceeds:** The school fully and consistently meets the criterion and is a potential exemplar in this area.
- **Meets:** The school generally meets the criterion and/or minor concern(s) are noted.
- **Partially Meets:** The school meets some aspects of the criterion but not others and/or moderate concern(s) are noted.
- **Falls Far Below:** The school falls far below the criterion and/or significant concerns are noted.

³⁴ Due to the number of items required for a public CMVS to be in compliance with state and federal regulations and guidance, the Department does not rate this category as a composite.

FAITHFULNESS TO CERTIFICATE

Criterion 1: Mission and Key Design Elements	
<i>Finding: TECCA has operated in a manner that is faithful to its mission, but the school has not implemented its program in a manner that delivers the results promised in its mission. TECCA did not meet a majority of its Accountability Plan goals.</i>	● Partially Meets

On August 1, 2018, the TECCA board adopted a revised mission statement promising to “provide Massachusetts students a quality public school experience.” Over the course of TECCA’s certificate, stakeholder groups consistently expressed a collective understanding of TECCA’s mission. As noted in the January 2019 Accountability Review and October 2021 Renewal Inspection Report, the Department found that TECCA has partially met its mission. Concerns documented during the certificate term demonstrate that there is still work to be done for the school to deliver a comprehensive and challenging curriculum, ensure that students are provided rigorous instructional tasks, and improve persistently low academic results from statewide assessments. Evidence provided by TECCA in its Certificate Renewal Application and documented in Department reports shows that TECCA continues to work with its partner organization, Connections Education, to improve the content and implementation of its academic offerings.

In December 2020, the Department provisionally approved TECCA’s request to replace its Accountability Plan approved in 2018 with a new Accountability Plan. In February 2021, the Commissioner approved the new Accountability Plan. TECCA’s Accountability Plan includes 3 objectives and 12 related measures. TECCA met 5 out of 12 measures in 2020-2021. See the 2021 Renewal Inspection Report for more details.

Sources: Renewal Inspection Report (October 2021), Accountability Reviews (January 2019 and January 2021), Certificate Renewal Application (June 2021), FY2018 through FY2021 Annual Reports

Criterion 2: Access and Equity	
<i>Finding: Throughout the certificate term, TECCA has worked to ensure program access and equity for all students eligible to attend the school.</i>	● Meets

As noted in accountability reviews and the Renewal Inspection Report, TECCA has improved the quality and amount of information publicly available regarding non-discrimination enrollment practices as well as the availability of specialized programming and services at the school to meet the needs of all students, students with disabilities, and English learners (EL). The school’s website, including enrollment pages and some recruitment materials, can be translated into multiple languages.

As of October 1, 2021, TECCA enrolled 2,686 students and maintained a waitlist of over 1,000 students. In four out of five years of the certificate term, TECCA enrolled percentages of students with disabilities at rates slightly higher than statewide averages. TECCA has consistently enrolled a percentage of students who are economically disadvantaged/low-income at rates higher than statewide averages. TECCA has always enrolled a population of ELs far below state averages. During the certificate term,

TECCA attrition rates decreased for all students and for high needs students; the school's stability rates improved. While improved, TECCA's attrition are far above and stability rates far below statewide averages.

As documented in accountability reviews, TECCA continues to ensure that all students have technological and material access to the educational program. The school provides the necessary materials for all students to be successful in online learning, including laptops, internet hotspots, assistive technology, partial internet reimbursement credit cards, hard copies of textbooks, and additional printed course materials and supplies. Digital content is accessible as required by law.

Sources: *Renewal Inspection Report (October 2021)*, *Accountability Reviews (January 2019 and January 2021)*, [TECCA's website](#), [TECCA's School Profile](#)

Criterion 3: Compliance

<i>Finding: For the most part, TECCA has compiled a record of compliance with the terms of its certificate and applicable state and federal laws and regulations.</i>

Finding: TECCA is operating in compliance with program requirements as determined by Tiered Focused Monitoring (TFM) Reviews.

The Department's [Office of Public School Monitoring](#) conducted a Tier 3 TFM review at TECCA in April 2019. Tier 3 reviews are conducted at schools where data points indicate moderate concerns for compliance and performance outcomes. The outcome of the visit was four findings in special education and one finding in civil rights. TECCA implemented a Corrective Action Plan to resolve findings during the 2019-2020 school year.

The Department's [Office of Language Acquisition](#) conducted a TFM review at TECCA in April 2019. The outcome of the visit was three findings in English language education. TECCA resolved all findings via the submission of regular progress reports.

Finding: TECCA is operating in compliance with legal requirements to employ licensed teachers.

- Faculty hold appropriate licensure, teach in their field, or teach under a waiver pursuant to G.L.c 71, section 38G.

Finding: The board of trustees operates in a manner that is not fully in compliance with the Open Meeting Law (OML) or its bylaws.

- Board meeting minutes do not include a list of documents and other exhibits used during meetings as required by OML.
- Board member qualifications do not meet the requirement specified in the board's bylaws. According to the board's bylaws, the board shall include (1) a TEC member district superintendent or assistant superintendent and (2) a school committee member from a TEC member school district as voting members of the board. TECCA's board membership does not include either of these required members.

Finding: TECCA has not submitted its required, annual financial audit in a timely manner.

- In fiscal year 2021, TECCA did not submitted its audit by the required date of January 1.

ACADEMIC AND PROGRAM SUCCESS

Criterion 4: Student Performance³⁵		
<i>Finding: Over its second five-year certificate term, TECCA has not met state student performance standards for academic growth, proficiency, or college and career readiness.</i>	2019 Overall Classification:	Requiring Assistance or Intervention
	Cumulative Progress Toward Improvement Targets:	46%
	2019 Accountability Percentile:	5

In 2017, schools such as TECCA that administered the Next-Generation MCAS assessment in grades 3-8 were not assigned a classification. In 2018, TECCA partially met targets for indicators included in the new statewide accountability system. The reason for TECCA’s 2018 classification, requiring assistance or intervention, is that the school was among the lowest performing 10 percent of schools. In 2019, TECCA made moderate progress toward targets. The reasons for TECCA’s 2019 classification, requiring assistance and intervention, are that the school is among the lowest performing 10 percent of schools, the graduation rate is low, the performance of students in the white group is low, and there was a low participation rate for the majority of student groups.

A majority of student performance data found in the statewide accountability system, such as achievement rates, growth scores, and graduation rates have been consistently below state rates during the certificate term, with the exception of 2021 student achievement rates when students took a modified MCAS examination. Dropout rates have been consistently above state rates as well. In its Application for Renewal, TECCA provided evidence that student performance on the SAT and AP exams had improved during the certificate term.

Sources: [2019 Accountability Report](#), *Certificate Renewal Application (June 2021)*

Key Indicator 5.1: Curriculum	
<i>Finding: The school’s documented curriculum is somewhat aligned to state curriculum frameworks and expectations. The school’s documented curriculum and supplemental lessons and materials support opportunities for most students to master skills and concepts. The curriculum is regularly reviewed and revised to ensure quality and effectiveness.</i>	● Partially Meets

TECCA has a contractual relationship with Connections Education LLC (CE) in which CE provides the English language arts, science, social studies, and mathematics curricula for students in grades K through 12 as well as the school’s LMS system, called Connexus.

³⁵ Accountability information represents determinations from 2019. The Department did not issue accountability determinations for the 2019-2020 school year due to the cancellation of state assessments and school closures related to COVID-19. The Department also did not issue new accountability determinations in 2021.

During the January 2021 Accountability Review and October 2021 Renewal Inspection, the Department found that TECCA’s documented curriculum is somewhat aligned to Massachusetts curriculum frameworks and expectations. The school has made progress in creating supplemental materials and is working with CE and a third-party vendor to better align core curricula with Massachusetts expectations. The school is working to horizontally align curriculum within grades and vertically align curriculum across all grade levels. The school’s documented curriculum and supplemental lessons and materials support opportunities for most students to master skills and concepts. During the certificate term, TECCA has improved the quality and consistency in providing curricular materials which provide access and support to ELs. The curriculum is regularly reviewed and revised to improve its quality and effectiveness.

Sources: Renewal Inspection Report (October 2021), Accountability Reviews (January 2019 and January 2021), Certificate Renewal Application (June 2021)

Key Indicator 5.2: Instruction	
<i>Finding: Over the course of its five-year certificate term, TECCA improved the implementation of the school’s instructional model. Observed instruction fostered student engagement and created supportive learning environments.</i>	● Meets

TECCA students spend the majority of the school day completing asynchronous coursework and contact teachers with questions or to request help. All TECCA students participate in weekly live lessons for core subject areas; elementary school students participate in multiple daily live lessons sessions in core subjects. Additionally, teachers use a live lesson format to deliver small group instruction or conduct curriculum-based assessments.

During the certificate term, teachers and administrators defined high quality instruction in ways that reflected a common understanding. Evidence from live lesson observations conducted over the course of the school’s certificate term noted improvement in the implementation of the school’s instructional model. During the renewal inspection, a majority of observed instructional practices were somewhat aligned with the school’s definition of high-quality instruction; a contrast from prior years where instruction did not reflect school expectations. Likewise, observations conducted as part of the renewal inspection noted improvements over prior years in the degree to which instruction fostered student engagement and learning environments were conducive to learning; over three-quarters of observed classrooms were observed to engage students and create supportive learning environments.

Sources: Renewal Inspection Report (October 2021), Accountability Review (January 2019), Certificate Renewal Application (June 2021)

Key Indicator 5.3: Assessment & Program Evaluation	
<i>Finding: Over the course of the school’s five-year certificate term, TECCA implemented a balanced assessment system and used data to monitor and improve student outcomes. TECCA has improved stakeholder use of data to evaluate and design remedies for the academic program.</i>	● Meets

Throughout the certificate term, TECCA has consistently implemented a balanced system of formative, summative, and benchmark assessments to monitor student progress. TECCA has administered Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy (DIBELS), the Longitudinal Evaluation of Academic Progress (LEAP) and

the Scantron Performance Series (SPS) assessments for mathematics and English language arts; a variety of curriculum-based assessments; as well as Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) and ACCESS testing. In 2020-2021, TECCA also began administering the Renaissance STAR 360 mathematics and English language arts assessments three times a year. TECCA implements systems in structures for appropriate test proctoring as required.

During the certificate term, the Department has documented an improvement in stakeholder use of data to modify instruction, improve student outcomes, and evaluate its programming. Evidence collected during the 2021 Accountability Review and 2021 Renewal Inspection note that TECCA’s teachers, administrators, and board members engage with and analyze multiple forms of data in efforts to improve outcomes for individual students or the school as a whole.

Sources: Renewal Inspection Report (October 2021), Accountability Reviews (January 2019 and January 2021), Certificate Renewal Application (June 2021)

Key Indicator 5.4: Diverse Learners	
<i>Finding: The school has systems to identify, assess, and serve all students, including but not limited to students with disabilities and English Learners. The school provides some supports to meet the academic needs for students.</i>	● Meets

During the certificate term, TECCA has improved its ability to meet the needs of diverse learners by increasing staffing, systemizing identification and assessment processes, and revising curricula. Since 2018, TECCA has increased the number of special education staff from 10 to 17 and altered its English Learner (EL) staff to consist of an EL teacher and an EL coordinator who also teaches. TECCA has further systemized its identification and assessment processes. The school’s Escalation and Issue Aware (IA) data tracking systems collects and stores various indicators of student data including attendance, grades, test results, intervention and RTI data, truancy. The IA system also facilitates the school’s response to intervention system (RTI), by allowing stakeholders to refer struggling students for supports or interventions provided, allow stakeholders to track implementation of those interventions, and assess further as needed. The Renewal Inspection Report contains evidence that TECCA has made multiple changes to the documented and supplemental curriculum to better support ELs. While a majority of supports for diverse learners are provided outside the live lesson format (supplemental curriculum, small group instruction or tutoring, consistent teacher availability, specific ESL classes), the Department observed few supports or resources (such as break out rooms, explicit instructional practices, or sheltered English immersion strategies) used during live lessons during the 2019 Accountability Review and the 2021 Renewal Inspection.

Sources: Renewal Inspection Report (October 2021), Accountability Reviews (January 2019 and January 2021), Certificate Renewal Application (June 2021)

Criterion 6: Culture and Family Engagement	
<i>Finding: TECCA has consistently supported students’ social and emotional health in a safe and respectful learning environment that engaged families.</i>	● Meets

Throughout the certificate term, the Department has found that TECCA creates a safe learning environment and addresses the physical, social, emotional, and health needs of its students by providing school guidance counselors and other professionals to work with students and families. TECCA also provides specific programming that addresses the physical, social, emotional, and health needs of students through course provision (such as physical education), social supports through small group counseling facilitated by social workers, social emotional learning (SEL) mini-lessons in core classes, specific SEL curriculum for grades K-8, extracurricular clubs and field trips (virtual during COVID), and policies and training about age-appropriate internet safety.

The school has structures that result in a respectful learning environment, including Acceptable Use policies that outline appropriate online behavior for students, processes to monitor and report cyberbullying, as well as technology guards for ways to monitor student browsing habits and interactions. A majority of instruction observed during the 2019 Accountability Review and the 2021 Renewal Inspection was characterized by clear routines, respectful speech, tone, and relationships.

The school develops and maintains strong working partnerships and communication with families in order to support students' academic progress and social and emotional well-being. Families reported that information on student progress via the online grade book is immediately available in the LMS to both students and families and is updated on an ongoing basis. Families also reported that the school provides multiple forms of communication, information, training, and resources throughout the school year including monthly family forums.

Sources: Renewal Inspection Report (October 2021), Accountability Reviews (January 2019), Certificate Renewal Application (June 2021)

ORGANIZATIONAL VIABILITY

Key Indicator 7.1: School Leadership	
<i>Finding: During the certificate term, TECCA has developed an effective school leadership team that obtains staff commitment to improving student learning and implements a clearly defined mission and set of goals.</i>	● Meets

TECCA's board of trustees approved the hiring of a new superintendent in July 2020 after the previous superintendent resigned. During the January 2021 Accountability Review, the Department found that the school's leadership team was implementing school academic programming and operations in a manner to meet a clearly defined mission and set of goals. Since his hire, the new superintendent has created a district leadership team (DLT), teacher professional learning groups, worked with the board to align the strategic plan with TECCA's accountability plan, and engaged in his own professional development via the New Superintendent Induction Program. The DLT meets weekly to review overall school health and progress in meeting the goals of TECCA's Accountability Plan, instructional effectiveness, student academic progress and well-being, and family and community interactions. Throughout the certificate term, while led by the current or former superintendent, the school clearly defined and delineated roles and responsibilities among leaders, staff, management, and board of trustees' members as documented by organizational charts, job descriptions, and school policy manuals as well as reinforced via yearly staff trainings. In the past two years, TECCA has implemented clear and well-understood systems for decision-making and communication processes among all members of the school community through its DLT, staff input mechanisms, weekly superintendent communication to

staff, and regular communication to families including bi-weekly homeroom check-in calls, webmail reminders, and regularly distributed school newsletters.

Sources: Renewal Inspection Report (October 2021), Accountability Reviews (January 2019 and January 2021), Certificate Renewal Application (June 2021)

Key Indicator 7.2 Professional Climate	
<i>Finding: During its second certificate term, TECCA has maintained a professional working climate for all staff.</i>	● Meets

Throughout the certificate term, the Department found that TECCA teachers engage in regular, frequent collaboration and professional development (PD) to improve implementation of the curriculum and instructional practice. TECCA provides multiple structures for teacher collaboration and professional development: an extensive orientation to new teachers transitioning from brick-and-mortar schools to an online environment; weekly professional development and collaboration for all staff (PLC, grade-level teams, RTI teams, as well as all staff sessions); as well as partnerships with external organizations such as Teacher21 to provide Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) trainings for the entire staff.

The school has an objective and transparent system in place for monitoring individual staff performance against established expectations. The system includes a formal process of evaluation for all employees, including teachers. TECCA implements the Department’s Evaluation Rubric and resources to evaluate the superintendent, administrators, and teachers; the teacher evaluation rubrics are modified to reflect online learning and TECCA’s specific learning model. TECCA’s DLT has recently implemented a new instructional coaching model with 4-week cycles focused on different topics tied to teachers’ evaluations and professional goals.

The organizational structure indicates appropriate staffing levels, including appropriate student to teacher ratios at various grade levels and content areas. As noted above, all teaching staff are licensed as required by law.

Sources: Renewal Inspection Report (October 2021), Accountability Reviews (January 2019 and January 2021), Certificate Renewal Application (June 2021)

Key Indicator 7.3: Contractual Relationships	
<i>Finding: TECCA and its board of trustees have established an effective working relationship with their partner organization, Connections Education.</i>	● Meets

As noted above, TECCA has a contractual relationship with Connections Education LLC (CE) in which CE provides the English language arts, science, social studies, and mathematics curriculum for students in grades K through 12; learning materials; the LMS system, called Connexus; technical support; and enrollment services as well as a number of other services. TECCA also has a service agreement with TEC, its founding entity.

TECCA operates under a five-year contract with CE that spans the school’s certificate term (FY2018 through FY2022). TECCA’s board of trustees sought three amendments to the contract during the certificate term (in November 2019, October 2020, and August 2021) all approved by the Commissioner. The November 2019 amendment sought approval for CE to provide additional business management services for a specific time period (November 2019 until June 2020). The October 2020 amendment allowed CE to provide additional educational services to TECCA until June 2022 (whereupon the current

contract expires), such as school improvement planning, state testing, professional development, and renewal processes. The August 2021 amendment lowered certain fees paid by TECCA to CE.

The Renewal Inspection Report notes that school stakeholders clearly understand the roles and responsibilities among the board, school leaders, and the contractual partner. The board of trustees and school leadership have established effective working relationships with their partner while maintaining appropriate separation between the entities. At TECCA’s request, CE is assisting with improvement of the curriculum to better align with state frameworks. The school’s board of trustees formally evaluates CE’s performance on an annual basis; however these processes are not well documented in board minutes.

Sources: Renewal Inspection Report (October 2021), Accountability Reviews (January 2019 and January 2021), Certificate Renewal Application (June 2021); TECCA-CE Contract and 2020/2021 Amendments, Financial Audits

Criterion 8: Governance	
<i>Finding: Members of the TECCA board of trustees act as public agents authorized by the state and provide competent and appropriate governance of the school.</i>	● Meets

TECCA is governed by a seven-member board of trustees. Board membership conforms with bylaws, except the board lacks two specific representatives (a TEC member district superintendent or assistant superintendent and a TEC member district school committee member). The board amended its bylaws in October 2017 to eliminate its committee structure.

The board fulfills a majority of its legal and fiduciary responsibilities. Meeting minutes for the full board and subcommittees are maintained and as noted in Criterion 3: Compliance above, board meeting minutes mostly conform with requirements of the Open Meeting Law. The board ensures appropriate oversight of the school leader and the school’s progress toward meeting academic goals. Over the past two years, the board of trustees has improved governance practices in these areas. During the certificate term, the superintendent evaluation process has become more formalized, documented in both board meeting minutes and written evaluations using the Department’s rubric for superintendents. In order to improve academic oversight, the board aligned its strategic plan with the academic goals of the school, and regularly examined and discussed disaggregated academic program data. While gathered evidence demonstrates that the board has improved some fiscal oversight during the certificate term, TECCA’s past four financial audits have all contained significant deficiencies or material weakness. The board has taken steps to address prior financial audit findings by approving a new financial policy manual, approving the hire of an in-house business manager, and creating systems for better oversight of monthly finances. Board members reported, and board meeting minutes confirm, that the board engages in governance tasks rather than management of day-to-day operations at the school.

The board has a clear and well-understood system for communication processes within the board itself and between board members and the school community. The board has a clear and well-understood system for decision-making processes. Board meeting minutes include evidence that meetings foster open, deliberate, and thorough discussions.

During the certificate term, the board has improved the degree to which it engages in continuous improvement planning as well as self-evaluation. In recent years, the board of trustees developed a more robust school improvement plan and aligned it with the school’s accountability plan. The board

has developed and implemented a succession plan for TECCA’s superintendent. During the certificate term, the board added two members and provided training and orientation for them. As noted in the Renewal Inspection Report, the board engages in frequent conversation around ongoing board recruitment, self-evaluations, and planning for annual board retreats.

Sources: Renewal Inspection Report (October 2021), Accountability Reviews (January 2019 and January 2021), Certificate Renewal Application (June 2021); Financial Audits

Criterion 9: Finance	
<i>Finding: TECCA has maintained a sound financial condition but repeated fiscal audits have noted a lack of internal controls.</i>	● Partially Meets

During the certificate term, TECCA has maintained somewhat sound and stable finances. During each year of the certificate term, (fiscal years 2019 through 2021), the school’s financial audit has contained findings of Significant Deficiencies or Material Weaknesses noting a lack of internal controls to ensure accurate and complete financial reporting. Additionally, TECCA’s financial audits have been submitted after the required deadline of January 1. For the past two fiscal years (FY2020 and FY2021), TECCA incurred a net income of \$580,000 and \$1,100,000 respectively, mainly due to an increase in enrollment as well as grant allocations.

Sources: FY2019, FY2020 and FY2021 Financial Audits, Financial Dashboard

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Virtual School Terms of Certificate

1. Name:

TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School (TECCA)

2. Board of trustees:

Jean Kenney
Peter Sanchioni
Grace Magley
Edmund F. DeHoratius
Sandra Einsel
Robert McGuire
Jerry Helsing

The board of trustees must include a minimum of five members. Members of the boards of trustees of Commonwealth of Massachusetts virtual schools may not be paid for attendance at board meetings but may receive reimbursement of reasonable expenses.

All appointed and proposed members of the board of trustees who hold or held a position, whether paid or unpaid, with The Education Cooperative or its member school districts must request a written opinion from the State Ethics Commission. Upon receipt, such individuals must provide a copy of that opinion to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

3. Term of certificate:

July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2022

4. Annual per pupil tuition rate:

In fiscal year 2022, tuition will be eight thousand, eight hundred and sixty-three dollars with \$75 per pupil retained by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for administration of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts virtual schools' program. (TECCA will receive \$8,788 per pupil.) The tuition for individual courses must be agreed upon between the virtual school and the sending districts. The virtual school may offer full time and individual courses to districts that are members of The Education Cooperative at a discount of no more than 50% of what other districts or schools are charged. The cost of special education services shall be calculated in accordance with 603 CMR 10.07(3) and shall be added to the per pupil tuition amount unless such services are provided in kind by the sending district.

5. Maximum enrollment and grade levels:

The maximum enrollment was amended, on October 6, 2021, with an increase of 300 additional seats, for a new maximum enrollment of 3,000. Granting additional seats was explicitly

conditioned on TECCA amending its enrollment policy to provide the first order of enrollment preference to students who are unable to attend school in-person because of the student’s medical condition. This request was granted to meet the elevated demand for students who are unable to attend to school in-person because of the student’s medical condition.

Grades	Enrollment
K-12	3,000

6. Enrollment region:

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

7. Mission, purpose, and specialized focus:

TEC Connections Academy mission statement was last amended on August 1, 2018, to read “TEC Connections Academy will provide Massachusetts students a quality virtual public-school experience.”

The school will serve primarily students in selected target groups, as indicated in the enrollment preferences.

8. Educational program, instructional methodology, and services for students:

The TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School will offer a rigorous, effective curriculum aligned to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and utilize unique technology tools to help every student succeed, while also encouraging social growth. The school will use the following instructional methods:

- Personalized learning plans to tailor curriculum and instruction;
- Learning Coach (parent/guardian) who works in person with the student, monitors progress, and communicates with the teacher;
- Computer and Internet connection to enable learning anytime, anywhere;
- Education management system that provides access to the curriculum, schedules, and assignments; stores student data; and monitors student progress;
- Real-time web conferences with individual students or groups of students using telephone, video, chat, electronic whiteboard, and shared web surfing;
- Teacher contact via telephone, email, or live web conference at least once every two weeks;
- Asynchronous interactive tutorials that employ graphics, audio, and video;
- Online and offline assessments including state assessments, ongoing informal assessments, telephone based curriculum assessments, and portfolio assignments;
- Multi-tiered intervention approach to provide targeted support for students who need it;
- Threaded discussions (at the high school level) to provide opportunities for collaboration and interaction; and
- Online student orientation opportunities such as videos and an online course to familiarize students with online learning.

The school will offer high school students a broad selection of courses, including diverse electives, to enable students to meet graduation requirements and prepare for college and a career. The school will offer mathematics, English language arts, science, history, foreign language, and arts courses, including Advanced Placement courses. All high school students will be offered courses sufficient to meet MassCore requirements, and the school's graduation requirement will meet or exceed the state competency determination standard required for high school graduation. Students will also be provided with internship opportunities.

To ensure students are fully engaged in learning, teachers will communicate regularly with parents/guardians via live synchronous sessions, email, and telephone conferences. Teachers will communicate with students as needed and at least once every two weeks, depending on the needs of the student.

The school will provide opportunities for students to develop socially, including but not limited to:

- regular field trips and outings facilitated by school staff and parent volunteers;
- back-to-school and end-of-the-year events such as picnics or other activities;
- clubs and activities through which students explore interests beyond the classroom;
- message boards to communicate with teachers, other students, and families; and
- school newsletters.

The school will offer Learning Academies in the following areas: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM); Arts; and Languages. These academies will offer at least four specialized courses. The STEM Academy will offer project-based learning, a variety of learning activities, personalized internships, early college learning experiences, and professional development for instructors.

9. Governance and bylaws:

The bylaws were last amended on May 12, 2016 (See Appendix A). If changes are proposed to the bylaws, the board of trustees of the TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School will submit any proposed updates to its bylaws to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for review and approval. The board of trustees shall request and receive Department approval in advance of implementing any changes.

10. School year:

Late August through June.

11. Enrollment policy and preferences:

The TECCA enrollment policy was last amended on October 25, 2021. (See Appendix B) The enrollment policy outlines the following enrollment preference to:

1. Students with medical conditions that require a virtual school setting due to health and safety;

2. Siblings of students currently attending the virtual school;
2. Students who reside in the districts that are members of The Education Cooperative;
3. Students with disabilities;
5. Students who have been expelled;
6. Students in institutionalized settings;
7. Students who are over-age for their grade;
8. Students who have dropped out or are at risk of dropping out;
9. Students who are pregnant or who have a child;
10. Students who feel bullied or who are out of school due to other safety concerns;
11. Students with unusual needs requiring a flexible schedule;
12. Students who seek academic work not available in their school;
13. Students in rural communities; and
14. Students who are gifted and talented.

If more applicants are received than the Commonwealth virtual school can admit within its enrollment limit, the TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School will admit students with an enrollment preference in the order of priority listed above and then will conduct an admissions lottery using an impartial lottery process that is consistent with state guidelines and regulations. Students who do not receive an offer of admission will have their names placed in a wait list.

12. The identity of third party software or curriculum vendor partnerships:

Educational courses including management software, learning materials, and technical support services will be provided by Connections Academy.

13. Proposed contracts or contract amendments with management/operational organization, including payments:

If changes are proposed to the contract with Connections Academy, the board of trustees of the TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School will submit any proposed amendments to its contracts to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for review and approval. The board of trustees shall request and receive Department approval in advance of implementing any amendments. Other operational services may be provided by the Education Cooperative.

The contract was last amended on June 23, 2020, October 6, 2020, and August 2021, respectively.

Exhibit C:

The contract modifies the provisions of the 2017 current contract, effective retroactively from November 1, 2019, to June 30, 2020, at which time the contract will revert to the provisions of the 2017 contract. The addendum states that Connections will provide additional services for accounting support, expense reporting, tracking receivables, facilitating accounts payable excluding any payment to Connections, and additional human resources support during a time of transition. The fee schedule was also amended to increase the monthly fee to be paid to

Connections by \$10.00 per student.

Exhibit D:

The contract amendment approved in October approved October 6, 2020 was submitted on August 17, 2020 to amend its certificate to include an addendum to the 2017 Contract between the Board of Trustees of TECCA and Connections Education LLC (Connections).

The addendum, Exhibit D, modifies the provisions of the 2017 current contract, effective retroactively from July 1, 2020 and co-terminus with that of the agreement, June 30, 2022. The addendum states that Connections will provide addition services and support related to school improvement planning, state testing, professional development, the development of a school handbook, and the certificate renewal process. Connections Education will also support the administration and board on public policy guidance, and regulatory submissions. Additionally, the fee schedule was amended to increase the monthly fee to be paid to Connections by \$1.50 in May, \$3.00 in June, and \$10.00 per student through the certificate term. Although this addendum is dated after the fact, TECCA and Connections had agreed to work together in good faith from May to June 2020.

Exhibit E:

The amendment approved in August 2021 removed the Partner School Leadership Team services, accelerated, and extended program options for students (Pathways), and Chromebook technology offering. Additionally, the fee schedule was amended to reduce the substitute teacher fee from \$350.00 to \$300.00, reduce the monthly fee for students without the PSLT from \$256.50 to \$255.00, create alternative pricing for staff not using a Connections laptop to \$435.00, and to increase the pricing when TECCA decides to use Connections to provide instruction in elective courses from \$1.90 to \$2.75

14. Demonstration of capacity to support and store all critical data in compliance with state and federal law:

The TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School will contract with Connections Academy, using its Connexus® Education Management System, for services to support and to store all critical data in compliance with state and federal law.

15. Adherence to assurances in the RFP:

The TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School will adhere to all assurances agreed to on pages 19-20 of the Application Process and Request for Proposals for Commonwealth of Massachusetts Virtual Schools (RFP) for schools opening in 2014-2015. This includes, but is not limited to, compliance with any regulations governing Commonwealth of Massachusetts virtual schools.