



**TEC Connections Academy (TECCA)  
Commonwealth Virtual School**

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# **TEC CONNECTIONS ACADEMY**

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**STUDENT HANDBOOK**

**2023-2024**

Greetings TECCA Families:

First and foremost, thank you for choosing TECCA! With our exceptional faculty, extensive academic options, and a schooling experience like no other, I am confident that you will enjoy being part of the TECCA community. It is my privilege to welcome you to the 2023-2024 school year. Whether you are a newly enrolled student, or returning for another year, welcome! We are pleased to have you as part of our virtual public school community. "The Mission of TECCA is to offer Massachusetts students a quality virtual public school experience," and I am confident we, together, will meet that expectation.

As an online virtual public school, students have the unique opportunity to learn outside of the traditional classrooms and have the flexibility to "do school" at a pace and time that fits each students' individual needs. Our unique school allows students to learn from a distance as we have students from all across the Commonwealth including the Cape and the Islands. Just because we are learning from a distance does not mean we are apart and disconnected. All of the faculty and staff at TECCA genuinely care about each student's growth and development and believe, "When we work together, success is inevitable".

In addition to the extensive core academics and elective course options, I would like to note that TECCA also offers a wide range of other activities and experiences for our students such as clubs, field trips, and other social events, such as prom, grade 8 socials, and beginning and end-of-the-year events. I encourage everyone to fully take advantage of all that TECCA has to offer so you can make the most of this stage in your life's journey. Please make every effort to participate in your academics and as many of these extracurricular activities as possible, as they will provide you with different perspectives, challenges, and opportunities to learn, have fun, succeed, and meet other students and families.

Please thoroughly review our Student Handbook as it contains a wealth of information. I wish you a successful, challenging, and rewarding academic year and career at TECCA!

All the best,

Patrick Lattuca, Ph.D.

Superintendent

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## General District Information

School Information	School Contact
Main District Phone Number	774-315-5123
School Fax Number	774-256-9343
School Address	141 Mansion Drive Suite 300 East Walpole, MA 02032
School Hours	8:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Technical/General Connexus Support	800-382-6010
TECCA Issued Laptop Support	888-569-0123 (24 x 7)
Webmail	All staff and support services are located in the Education Management System's (Connexus®) WebMail address book.

## District Administration Contact Information

Title	Person and Number
Superintendent	Dr. Patrick Lattuca, 774-335-5327
Assistant Superintendent	Mrs. Heidi Nelson-Buffa, 774-335-5319
Executive Assistant to Administration	Mrs. Kayla Guilbert, 774-335-5297
Director of Counseling Services	Mrs. Sarah Dalton, 774-335-5268
Interim Director of Special Education	Ms. Marcia Berkowitz, 774-335-5405
Director of 504s and Student Analytics	Ms. Arieta-Heaney, 774-335-5228
Coordinator of Student and Family Success	Mr. Kevin Stasak, 774-335-5270
Supervisor of Multilingual Programs	Ms. Jodi Anthony, 774-335-5276
Supervisor of Testing/Instruction	Ms. Morgan Jean-Pierre, 774-335-5312
Supervisor of Testing/Curriculum	Mr. Brandon Lemos, 774-335-5330
High School Principal	Dr. Robert Shaw, 774-335-5384
Middle School Principal	Mrs. Jessica Hunter, 774-335-5309
Elementary School Principal	Mrs. Melanie Joubanian, 774-335-5314
Title IX Coordinator	Mrs. Rose Bragdon, 774-335-5245
TECCA Board of Directors	Refer to the <a href="#">school webpage</a> for most current contact information.

## District Overview

TECCA does not exclude, deny benefits to, or otherwise discriminate against any person on the basis of ethnic group identification/ethnicity, marital status, race, color, national origin, ancestry, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), religion, physical or mental disability, homeless status, or age and provides equal access and any other category protected by federal or state law in the admission to, participation in, or receipt of the services under any of the TECCA programs and activities, or in its employment practices.

### TECCA's Core Values

TECCA adopted District Core Values in 2021, which were revised in 2023. These core values reflect our commitment to providing Massachusetts students a quality public school experience.

Student Centric: TECCA is committed to implementing policies, procedures, and practices that focus on the growth, development, and success of all students.

School Community: TECCA strives to create a professional and ethical school community where all voices are heard, valued, and respected.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging: TECCA seeks to foster a school culture that provides a safe and encouraging learning environment with an emphasis on diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.

### TECCA's Portrait of a Graduate

In 2022, the TECCA School Board along with district and school administrators developed and adopted the Portrait of a Graduate (POG). This collaboration included a variety of stakeholders: parents, families, community members, educators, students, and our TECCA leadership.

This adoption of POG acknowledges that in our rapidly changing world, education needs to evolve to fulfill our mission of supporting student success in school and in life. POG prioritizes the development of skills that will empower students to be productive citizens of a global community and successful in the workforce of the future.

## PORTRAIT OF A TECCA GRADUATE



The following are TECCA's top six essential skills/characteristics/traits that TECCA believes would best prepare TECCA students for the next stage of their life journey.

**Critical Thinking** - TECCA graduates will demonstrate a genuine curiosity, an ability to make observations, recognize that a problem or challenge exists, develop higher-order questions, determine which support, resources and stakeholder collaboration might be needed to understand and to solve a problem using multiple perspectives while making real-world applications.

**Growth Mindset** - TECCA graduates will view challenges and mistakes as opportunities for learning and will understand that growth is always possible when they are able to reflect on and accept their past behavior, decisions or results in order to set additional goals. Graduates are able to accept that talents are cultivated as opposed to fixed, and will successfully articulate new areas of growth.

**Respect** - TECCA graduates will demonstrate concern for the feelings of others, listen for understanding, view differences as opportunities for learning, and an openness to learning and celebrating cultures, values and opinions that differ from their own.

**Application of Knowledge** - TECCA graduates will have the ability to recognize what they have learned and will be able to identify the appropriate opportunities to apply their acquired knowledge from one circumstance, situation or context to another. Graduates will be able to synthesize knowledge acquired across the curriculum to make connections and to solve complex, real-world problems.

**Communication Skills** - TECCA graduates will practice active listening and will be successfully able to express their thoughts, feelings, ideas and beliefs to others using oral, written and nonverbal communication strategies deemed appropriate for a given context or audience.

**Life Skills** - TECCA graduates will acquire skills that will be transferable to a variety of contexts including the workplace, personal and social settings. These include organizational skills, financial management, communication skills, decision-making and problem-solving skills, self-awareness, time management, navigating and managing conflict, self-regulation, resilience, self-advocacy, empathy for others, and perseverance.

**2023 -2024 School Calendar (Link to the Master Calendar is [HERE](#))**

<b>Event</b>	<b>Date</b>
First Day of First Semester	Wednesday, 8/30/23
Labor Day Break (No School)	Friday, 9/1/23 through Monday, 9/4/23
Columbus Day (No School)	Monday, 10/9/23
Veterans' Day (No School)	Observed Friday, 11/10/23
Thanksgiving Break (No School)	1/2 Day Wednesday, 11/22/23 through Friday, 1/24/23
Winter Break (No School)	Monday, 12/25/23 through Friday, 12/29/23
WIDA/ Access Testing	TBD
New Years Day (No School)	Monday, 1/1/24
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (No School)	Monday, 1/15/24
First Semester End Date	Friday, 1/19/24
Intersession (No School)	Monday, 1/22/24
First day of Second Semester	Tuesday, 1/23/24
100 <sup>th</sup> Day Countdown Celebration	Monday 2/5/24
Presidents' Day/ February Break (No School)	Monday, 2/19/24
February Break (No School)	Monday, 2/19/24 through Friday, 2/23/24
Patriots Day (No School)	Monday, 4/15/24
April Break (No School)	Monday, 4/15/24 through Friday, 4/19/24
High School Prom	TBD
Memorial Day (No School)	Monday, 5/27/24
Moving up Ceremonies, Grades K and 5	Friday, 6/7/24
Moving up Ceremony, Grade 8	TBD
High School Graduation	TBD
Last Day of School	Tuesday, 6/11/24

**2023 -2024 MCAS Testing dates**

<b>All MCAS Testing and Retest Dates</b>	
High School ELA Retest	MCAS Dates will be released when the department of education releases the calendar for the 23-24 School Year.
High School Math Retest	
High School Science Retest	
High School ELA Retest	
High School Math Retest	
High School ELA	
Elementary & Middle School (3 - 8)	
High School Math	
High School Science	

## **Enrollment**

It is important for enrolling students and families to balance the reasons for enrolling in TECCA with their ability and willingness to meet the expectations and responsibilities articulated in this School Handbook. The school will provide support for students to enhance their success in online learning before the students start significant coursework. Throughout the enrollment process and post-enrollment, TECCA will work closely with families to help them be successful in the online environment. If you have any questions regarding enrollment, please contact our Coordinator of Student and Family Success at 774-335-5270.

### **Residency**

To be eligible to enroll in TECCA, a student must be a resident of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and must provide proof of residency during the enrollment process as described on the enrollment page of the [district's website](#). If your residence changes during the school year, you are required to provide an updated proof of residency in order to remain enrolled as a student at TECCA. TECCA reserves the right to ask for an updated proof of residency if questions arise over a student's living location. Once enrolled, should relevant information arise, TECCA reserves the right to question a student/family status as a resident of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The family will be given an opportunity to come to the TECCA office to present information verifying residency; in the absence thereof, the student may be withdrawn from TEC Connections Academy.

### **Compliance with Local, State, and Federal Mandates**

TECCA will implement and follow its Student Recruitment and Retention Policy in accordance with the regulations governing the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Virtual Schools and in compliance with TECCA's Certificate of Organization. The detailed recruitment and retention policy statement is provided on the school's enrollment web page in the Enrollment Policy Document.

TECCA also abides by all applicable federal, state, and local statutes, policies, and guidelines for student enrollment and will not impose enrollment requirements that are inconsistent with these policies and guidelines, including compliance with the McKinney-Vento Act regarding homeless students. The school leader or his/her designee shall serve as the liaison for homeless students and the DCF liaison. Students who meet the definition of homeless shall not be barred from enrolling due to lack of required documents.

### **Minimum and Maximum age to Enroll**

To enroll in Kindergarten the student must be 5 years of age by August 31st. Each child must attend school beginning no later than September of the calendar year in which the child turns 6. A student may stay enrolled in TECCA until the age of 21 for general education students, and 22 for special education students. In order to verify legal name, date of birth, and to confirm any age eligibility requirements are met, applicants for kindergarten or who are entering 1st grade having not attended kindergarten must submit a copy of the student's official birth certificate. If a student does not have a birth certificate, TECCA will accept alternative documentation such as a religious, hospital, or physician's certificate showing date of birth; an adoption record; an affidavit from a parent; or



previously verified school records; or any other documents. Students in other grades may also submit a copy of the student's official birth certificate or a passport, green card, baptismal or birth record. TECCA will not bar or discourage a student from attending school because the student lacks a birth certificate.

### **Enrollment Incentives**

TECCA does not use financial or technology incentives to recruit students.

### **Assignment of Grade Levels for Enrolling Students**

Grade levels are assigned according to the following processes:

- **Elementary and Middle School**: Student report cards are reviewed and grade levels determined by the last elementary and/or grade completed. If the student was retained at their former school they will be retained at TECCA as well.
- **High School**: Grade level in grades 9-12 are determined solely by credits earned to date. The School Counseling Department reviews student transcripts and translates credits earned to TECCA's credit system. A full year course at TECCA is awarded 1 credit. A semester-long course is awarded .50 credits. A student at TECCA must have earned a minimum of 4.5 credits for 10th grade status, 10.5 credits for 11th grade status, and 17 credits for 12th grade status.

### **Enrollment of Students who were Suspended/Expelled from a Previous School**

Students who have been suspended from another school and who are eligible to return to that school system, but who wish to enroll in TECCA, will be required to submit a disciplinary history to TECCA during the enrollment process. If a student has been expelled from another school they are required to submit a disciplinary history to TECCA during the enrollment process which will be reviewed by the school principal who will make a final decision regarding enrollment. Failure to accurately disclose a prior suspension or expulsion during the placement process that is later verified through prior school records may result in an immediate withdrawal. Students who have a pending legal matter must indicate so. Failure to disclose this information may result in immediate withdrawal. For additional questions regarding this policy, please reach out to TECCA's Coordinator of Student and Family Success at 774-335-5270.

### **Students Enrolling After the Start of the School Year**

All students who enroll after the first day of a new semester will be skipped ahead to the day of enrollment and not be responsible for completing any school work that was assigned prior to enrollment. Students are encouraged to review coursework covered prior to their enrollment to ensure their understanding and success. Students and Caretakers/Learning Coaches are expected to complete a Getting Started orientation course within 1 week of enrolling. For specific information for students enrolling after the school year, please see the respective school section(s) below.

## Dual Enrollment in another K-12 Public School

A student is not allowed to enroll in TECCA while being enrolled in another public school. It is incumbent upon the Caretaker to officially notify the "District of Residence" of their student's withdrawal upon enrollment at TECCA. Failure to do so may result in immediate withdrawal. This statement is acknowledged by parents/legal guardians prior to final confirmation.

## Physical Education

In accordance with MA General Law - Part I, Title XII, Chapter 71, Section 3, all TECCA students will be required to take one PE course per grade for the purpose of promoting the physical well-being of all students. Instruction in physical education may include calisthenics, gymnastics and military drill; but no pupil shall be required to take part in any military exercise if his parent or guardian is of any religious denomination conscientiously opposed to bearing arms, or is themselves so opposed, and the school committee is so notified in writing; and no pupil shall be required to take part in physical education exercises if a licensed physician certifies in writing that in his opinion such physical education exercises would be injurious to the pupil.

## Attendance Policy

School attendance is discussed regularly during homeroom check-ins with the student and family. Students are reminded of the expectation to submit work to align with attendance hours during these calls. Students who need additional support to engage in school for reasons such as homelessness, financial concerns, mental health or family based concerns, parenting responsibilities, etc., are referred to the social work department and home visits are conducted to help the student/family access needed resources and make a plan to engage in school. If after several interventions are proven unsuccessful to re-engage the student, social workers may file 51as with DCF and/or CRAs with the court system as needed.

## Required Instructional Hours

Grade (s)	Weekly Required Hours	Annual Required Hours
Elementary School	25	900
Middle School	28	990
High School	28	990

\* Note that these are the minimum hours required by the state and that students are responsible for mastering all material, which may require additional time.

## **Defining, Marking, and Verifying Attendance**

Attendance is defined as participating in TECCA School-related activities and curriculum, completing assignments, and attending livelessons.

Caretakers must enter student attendance in Connexus daily. The homeroom teacher verifies that the attendance records are accurate by reviewing face to face check-in attendance, LiveLesson attendance, lessons/assessment completion, attendance at regularly scheduled meetings, and through conversations with the students during bi-weekly check-in calls. Daily Student Attendance expectations include:

- Attend livelessons daily and complete assigned schoolwork.
- Attend daily face to face check in opportunities.
- Participate in check-in calls/meetings.
- Attend all scheduled meetings and targeted learning sessions with TECCA staff.

Homeroom teachers monitor attendance completion daily. Attendance hours that are entered, but which are not substantiated by the student's lesson completion, or verified through conversations with the student's caretaker, may be retroactively changed by the homeroom teacher or attendance coordinator. When attendance hours are adjusted due to a misalignment of student participation/engagement/work completion to the submitted hours, the caretaker will be notified, and any missed hours will be required to be made up.

## **Absences**

An absence at TECCA is defined as a day in which a student does not complete school work, does not attend required LiveLessons or face to face check-ins, participate in any other expected instructional opportunities or TECCA school-related activities and does not have any documentation of an excused absence, and/or does not complete the missed hours elsewhere in the week.

Students who are absent due to medical reasons will be marked excused by the homeroom teacher only after the parent sends a webmail indicating the reason for the absence. Students needing an excused absence beyond three days in a row or five total absences in one semester will be required to have a doctor's note, otherwise the absences will be marked unexcused. Excused absences will also be given for bereavement.

Caretakers are expected to send a webmail explaining any missed hours to the homeroom teacher by the close of school on the Monday following the absence.

## **Attendance/Contact Intervention System**

If a student is absent for more than 5 days without logging in or does not have contact with a TECCA staff member the following actions will take place:

1. The homeroom teacher will continue to follow our contact policy of calling daily until contact has been made.
2. A contacts IA is created after the third attempt of no contact, at which point the Attendance Clerk will send written notification that contact has not been made.
3. If contact is not made within 1 school day, the family will receive outreach from an administrator that they must contact their homeroom teacher immediately.
4. After this attempt, if no contact is made, the homeroom teacher with the support of the school counselor will request a welfare check via the local police department.

The attendance intervention system is implemented and tracked by the Family Engagement Coordinators (FEC) and the Attendance Clerk. The following outlines the attendance monitoring and intervention system:

- Approaching Alarm for attendance (71%-85% of the expected hours over the course of three weeks) is an indicator that the student has not been attending as expected. Once a student enters Approaching Alarm for attendance, they will receive written communication indicating that they are at risk of truancy.
- If a student remains in Approaching Alarm for attendance for greater than 2 weeks, they will be added to the FEC roster for monitoring which may include regular meetings, goal setting, etc. as described below.
- If a student progresses to Alarm for attendance (70% or less of the expected hours of the course of three weeks - indicating they are habitually truant), a meeting will be set up with the FEC, student, parent, and other school staff (homeroom teacher, counselor, etc.) as appropriate.
- A student who remains in Alarm for attendance for more than 4 weeks is at risk of being withdrawn due to truancy.

### **Connexus Attendance Codes and System Controls**

The attendance codes will be implemented in the following manner:

Code	Definition	Who Records?
0-9	Hour of Schooling	Learning Coach
V	Vacation (see definition)	Learning Coach
E	Excused (see definition)	Teacher or Attendance Coordinator
U	Unexcused	Teacher or Attendance Coordinator

## Attendance Responsibilities by Role

### Caretaker Responsibilities

The caretaker (defined as a parent, legal guardian, and/or learning coach) is responsible for ensuring that students meet the attendance expectations as set for above. And should complete the following action steps daily:

- Indicate the number of hours (0-9) the student worked each day of the week.
- Refer to the Required Instructional Hours section of this handbook for important information on minimum weekly recommended hours, and ensure students spend the required time in schooling activities.
- Enter a Vacation Day (V) for all school holidays when the student does not complete work.
- Only enter weekend hours if a student has undertaken educational activity, otherwise weekend days should be left blank.

If the student does not plan to attend school on a regularly scheduled school day, the caretaker should indicate that in the attendance system by using the:

- “V” for vacation day. Vacation (V) days may be entered by a caretaker if a student takes a vacation day outside of a regularly scheduled school vacation. If a vacation day is used in this manner, it must be deducted from the vacation day schedule set by the district. For example, if a student takes a vacation day on October 3rd, they would then need to complete schoolwork on a scheduled vacation day such as Indigenous Peoples Day on October 10th.
- Students have a designated number of vacation days for the school year based on the [school year calendar](#), and that number cannot be exceeded. Students who exceed the allotted vacation days will enter “Vacation Escalation” and be expected to make those hours up or receive an unexcused absence.
- Families and staff can track the number of remaining vacation days in the “Students Vacation Day Tracking” Dataview.
- Vacation days may not be used during mandatory state testing days.
- If a parent is requesting an excused absence for a medical reason, the parent or caretaker must submit a webmail to the homeroom teacher within three days of the absence.
- A doctor’s note is required for all absences beyond 3 in a row or 5 in one semester.

Students who miss work at any point are responsible for completing that work within the late work submission policy established by their school as outlined in the student handbook. Unsubmitted work will be given a zero.

### Homeroom Teacher Responsibilities

The homeroom teacher is responsible for monitoring lesson completion, LiveLesson attendance, face to face check-in attendance, and other student interactions and ensuring the hours logged align with the student’s engagement and participation levels. The homeroom teacher completes the following tasks:

- Conducts biweekly check-in calls/meetings with the student.
- Reviews attendance biweekly and ensures caretakers are regularly logging attendance hours.
- Monitors attendance hours compared to lesson completion, LiveLesson attendance, & other learning opportunities to ensure the student is fulfilling their attendance requirements.
- Engages the student and caretaker in regular conversations about the expectations for attendance and the importance of full engagement to the student's achievement.
- Refers students to the next layer of support when necessary (escalation, missed face to face check-ins, continued difficulty with meeting the attendance expectations, etc.)
- Works with the caretaker, attendance clerk, & the FEC to modify attendance to align with work completion and student engagement per the above described policy.

### **Family Engagement Coordinator Responsibilities**

In conjunction with the Homeroom teacher, the Family Engagement Coordinators (FECs) regularly review all attendance records and support students in the truancy/engagement process (per the procedures set forth within the escalation system outlined above). The role of the FEC is to be an additional support person for TECCA students' who demonstrate difficulty with meeting attendance and participation requirements. A student who remains in Alarm for attendance for more than 4 weeks is at risk of being returned to their sending district due to truancy. Each school (elementary, middle, and high school) has an FEC who supports students who are identified as at risk of truancy or truant by following the re-engagement process. Re-engagement at TECCA is an individualized intervention to support students with completing work and meeting attendance expectations. Some of these interventions may include but are not limited to:

- Daily study halls.
- Goal Setting Practices, Academic Growth plans, etc..
- Regular and mandatory meetings between the family and the engagement team
- Additional scheduled meetings with teachers.
- FECs track students from the beginning of the truancy process through to either successful re-engagement or the return to sending district.
- FECs schedule and lead all truancy/engagement meetings with students, caretakers, and the team.

### **Attendance Clerk Responsibilities**

The attendance clerk is the supervisor of attendance for the district and oversees all attendance record keeping. The attendance clerk works closely with the FECs, homeroom teachers, counselors, and social workers to ensure that attendance is being accurately logged for all students and that students are meeting the expectations.

- Review Attendance Records – The attendance clerk monitors and reviews attendance records on a daily basis.
- Monitor Attendance Issues – The school's Attendance clerk monitors student attendance. They contact families with low attendance rates, and work to help them stay in compliance.
- Maintaining the Integrity of the Attendance Data – After seven days, the attendance system is locked and days prior cannot be edited. Any requests for adjustments to the previously

verified records must go to the Attendance Clerk in writing for review, approval and adjustment.

- Host daily opportunities for face to face check-ins with students who have not attended with their schools, monitor for completion and implement next steps according to the policy if students continue to not attend.

## **Attendance Reporting**

### **Reporting for General Education Students**

General Education Students who do not meet attendance and participation expectations after all interventions have been fully implemented (including but not limited to team meetings, additional check-in calls, attending office hours, regular meetings with caretakers, LiveLesson attendance, etc.) are returned to their sending district in the best interest of their safety and learning.

The following scenarios detail when families receive notifications via both phone and text using our district communication system:

- Students who have blank attendance will receive a call & text within three business days.
- Students who are missing attendance hours from the week prior will receive a call on Monday reminding them of the attendance expectations.
- Students who have not had a face to face check-in in the last five days will receive a call and a text.
- Students who do not log in for greater than 2 school days, do not have attendance logged, and do not have a vacation day or excused absence will receive a call and a text.

### **Reporting for Special Education & 504 Students**

Outreach for Special Education & 504 students will be the same as above, in addition, the special education TEAM will notify the parent that the student is in violation of meeting the attendance and participation requirements and discuss possible strategies, support, etc. The parent will also be notified that if the student continues to violate these requirements, the TEAM may be reconvened to review current services/supports and placement and that a representative from the student's home district will be invited to attend to discuss changes in services and/or placement.

For Special education & 504 students who do not meet attendance and participation expectations after all interventions have been fully implemented (including but not limited to team meetings, additional check-in calls, attending office hours, regular meetings with caretakers, LiveLesson attendance, etc.) the special education TEAM will be reconvened to discuss that the students is not meeting attendance and participation expectations. A representative of the student's home school district will be invited to attend the TEAM meeting. The TEAM will consider the student's disability and impact on attendance and participation and discuss whether the current services and/or placement are appropriate to meet the student's needs. The TEAM may decide to amend the current services and/or issue a new IEP should a change in placement be the TEAM's recommendation. A change in placement could be a program or services in the home district or an out of district placement.

## **LiveLesson Attendance Expectations**

All students at TECCA are expected to attend LiveLessons for their academic courses either live or by watching the recorded LiveLesson. Students receiving services through an Individualized Education Program (IEP) are required to attend those services live. These services may include lessons in inclusion classes, special education learning supports with special education teachers, related services such as speech/language, occupational therapy, and virtual counseling, etc., Students who attend LiveLessons experience a much higher degree of success at TECCA, and caretakers are expected to support their students' attendance. Teachers at TECCA use LiveLesson attendance and participation toward the overall grade in the corresponding course.

**All assignments given during LiveLesson are considered required and are expected to be completed following the same timeline as all other asynchronous work. Students will receive 0s for incomplete work from LiveLesson.**

LiveLesson attendance is logged by the TECCA staff member who is responsible for hosting each LiveLesson.

## **Contact Requirements**

### **Webcams and Microphones**

All TECCA students are expected to be available to meet with teachers in the LiveLesson room. As a part of these meetings, students may be asked to use their webcam and/microphone to demonstrate learning. Please reach out to your homeroom teacher if you do not have these items.

### **Homeroom Check in Calls**

All students at TECCA are required to speak with their homeroom teachers at least once every two weeks and there are no exceptions to this requirement. Homeroom teachers will set up a mutually agreed upon time to conduct this call at the start of the school year or upon enrollment. Whenever possible, the biweekly check-in will be conducted in the LiveLesson room to allow for face to face interaction. If a student cannot make their scheduled check in call they are responsible for notifying their homeroom teacher and attending a re-scheduled check in call. Missed check in calls are akin to skipping class and can have disciplinary consequences as described in the face to face check in policy.

### **Live Mandatory Face to Face Check-Ins**

For the safety of all students and as required by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, students are required to attend virtual face to face check-ins, which occur daily during LiveLesson classes, during special check-in time, and/or during the biweekly contact. Students are



required to attend these face to face check-ins on a regular basis. All biweekly check-in calls will be completed in the LiveLesson room to allow for face to face interaction between the student and homeroom teacher. Homeroom teachers will reach out via phone to students who miss their scheduled time. Please refer to specific face to face check in expectations for each school in their respective school section(s).

## District Truancy

Caretakers and students are jointly responsible for ensuring that students meet TECCA's attendance requirements, and that the student's attendance is properly documented as described above. School administration is responsible for enforcing the Massachusetts Public School Attendance Laws. Students not attending school as mandated by law will be considered truant.

Truancy at TECCA is defined as:

1. Three (3) or more days of consecutive unexcused absences and/or days in which no work has been completed.
2. Five (5) or more days in which no work has been completed within a six-month period.
3. Not meeting the state-mandated minimum number of hours per week on a regular basis (See "Required Attendance Hours").
4. Low participation or lesson completion rate.
5. Attendance and engagement are two very different dynamics, meaning, a student can be found truant if they are attending but not engaged.

\* TECCA has zero tolerance for truancy. Caretakers are responsible for ensuring their student is fully participating in school, even if they have designated another individual as their student's caretaker. If the student does not meet attendance requirements as described above, then attendance hours should not be marked by the caretaker.

In order to avoid truancy, the caretaker must ensure that the following activities are taking place:

1. The student must complete lessons, assessments, and portfolios as outlined on their planner.
2. The student must meet attendance hours as described above.
3. The student must attend all regularly scheduled telephone calls with teachers.
4. The student attends or watches all assigned LiveLesson sessions and recordings.
5. The student attends all mandatory school and state testing sessions.
6. The student attends all daily face to face check-ins.

If a student has been found to be truant, TECCA will take the following actions:

1. TECCA will notify the caretaker and initiate a formal Truancy Meeting. Participants in this meeting will include the Family Engagement Coordinator (FEC), the caretaker, the student, and all other relevant stakeholders.
2. At the Truancy Meeting, a "Truancy Intervention Plan" which outlines the steps and actions required to support a student out of truancy status will be developed. This plan will support the belief that if the student follows the prescribed steps, the student will no longer be in truancy status. The FECs in each school are responsible for monitoring the Truancy Intervention Plan. If the student is a special education student, this will also be held as a reconvene meeting to discuss student

progress and a notice will be provided to the parent documenting the requirements that the student must fulfill moving forward.

3. If the student does not meet the conditions of the Truancy Plan, TECCA will take action, including but not limited to returning the student to their sending district. If the student is a special education student, the team will hold a placement meeting to discuss whether or not the student can access a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) at TECCA. A representative from the student's home district will be invited to participate as a member of the placement team. (See Massachusetts special education regulation 603 CMR 28.10 (6))

### **Failure to Engage**

TECCA students who do not attend school at the start of the school year will be marked as absent and after 3 days will be placed into the process for "Failure to Engage". The process for these students is below:

1. Families are notified via the all call system daily when attendance is not logged.
2. On day 3 of the new school year, all students who do not have attendance marked for the school year, will be notified via personal email & webmail that their student is at risk of truancy.
3. If contact continues to not be met after day 6 of the new school year, the family will be notified via personal email & webmail that the student has not had attendance hours logged, is truant, and will be withdrawn if they do not engage by the close of school on September 30th. Outreach attempts will continue to be made in the form of calls, certified letters, home visits, and welfare checks.
4. Home visits or welfare checks will be scheduled for students who are not engaged on day 9 of the new school year.
5. Certified letters outlining the attendance expectations, Truancy policy, Failure To Engage Policy, and Withdrawal Policy will be sent to all caretakers whose students are not engaged on day 12 of the new school year.
6. All students who are not engaged will continue to receive outreach until September 30th by the homeroom teacher and/or the attendance clerk daily.
7. On September 30th, all students who have not yet engaged will be withdrawn from TECCA and marked as a dropout (for students in grades 6-12) or student status/location unknown (for students in grades K-5).

### **Withdrawing from TECCA**

We want all students to enroll and remain at TECCA. If you are considering withdrawing from our district, please reach out and let us know so we can see if we can help and/or support you and/or your family. When families initiate a withdrawal they must indicate the next schooling location or plans in the withdrawal data view. The homeroom teacher will then contact the family to discuss the withdrawal, the reason, and information regarding the next school the student will be attending, if applicable. The withdrawal data view is then used by the registrar to send records to the next school district during the withdrawal process.

## Student Dropout

Before considering dropping out of school, please let us know prior to doing so to see if we can provide you support, intervention, and/or help so you are able to stay with us and earn a high school diploma. You chose us and we want to help you be successful! If TECCA confirms with a caretaker that a student is dropping out of school, TECCA codes them as such in the appropriate dataview. The student is then added to TECCA's dropped out list, which lists all students who will be contacted twice per year regarding their current status (i.e pursuing/passing a GED, the ability to re enroll in another school, etc.).

## Mandatory Testing

### Renaissance STAR 360 ELA & Mathematics Assessments

All TECCA students from kindergarten through 12th grade **are required to participate in the STAR 360 ELA & Math assessment.** These Star 360 assessments will provide teachers with valuable data to promote student growth and learning. Upon completion of the assessments, teachers will personalize instruction to best support each individual student. The results of these assessments will be used to report student growth from the beginning of the year to the end of the year to the Department of Education, as a part of our School Accountability Plan. Both the STAR 360 ELA, the STAR 360& Math, and writing benchmark assessments are mandatory and are administered three times throughout the school year.

Students in grades K-8 will complete the STAR 360 assessments 3 times each school year. The assessments will be completed in small groups in the LiveLesson room, using both cameras & microphones. Students who complete the assessments within each of the testing windows will receive a 10/10 quiz grade in the gradebook. Students missing the assessments will receive a 0/10.

Each TECCA 9th-12th grade student will be assigned to a STAR 360 Assessment course, where they will receive a grade for each round of testing. The STAR 360 course will be a credit bearing course for all High School students, worth 0.25 credits. The course will be graded as pass/fail, students will receive a passing score for the course if they attend all testing sessions offered while they are enrolled at TECCA. Any student who does not attend STAR 360 during the assigned window, will receive a detention (6th-8th) or mandatory study hall (K-5), which will be served in the LiveLesson room and the STAR 360 tests will be administered at this time by a school administrator.

**All STAR 360 assessments are proctored virtually and require students to use their webcams for monitoring throughout the assessment sessions.**

### MCAS Testing

Students attending TECCA **are required to participate** in the state testing, known as the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). **There is no "opt out" option for MCAS exams.** TECCA courses are aligned to the MA curriculum state standards, where instructional activities and assessments are thoughtfully crafted to help prepare students for the content they will encounter on the MCAS assessments. These tests measure academic achievement

of all public school students in the Commonwealth.

- Parents/Caretakers are expected to know the MCAS assessment dates.
- Test sites are assigned by region, concerns regarding test site or time are submitted through a google form. There is not a guarantee that site or time can be changed.
- In the event that MCAS is proctored virtually, TECCA students will be required to use their webcams during the testing sessions.
- Students in grades 3-8 take the ELA and Mathematics MCAS exams.
- Students in grades 10 take the ELA and Mathematics MCAS exams.
- Students in grades 5, 8, and 9 take the Science MCAS exams.
- Students in grades 9-12 who do not earn a passing score on their MCAS exams are required to retake the exams not passed. \*

\*In order to obtain a high school diploma students must pass the English Language Arts, Mathematics and Science and Technology/Engineering MCAS exams. Refer to: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/overview.html> for more information, including requirements for graduation.

Students who are absent for any reason other than a medically documented condition will be considered to have an Unexcused Absence (U) for the day(s) they did not test. MCAS testing days are considered to be “required days of school.” All students must be physically present at their test site on their scheduled test day. Students not testing will be given school work to complete. Being absent from these “required days” is considered to be “skipping school.” All students are expected to stay in their assigned testing session a minimum of 90 minutes. More information about the administration of the tests, including specific dates and locations, will be regularly updated in the Virtual Library.

## Multilingual Learners and WIDA/ACCESS Testing

TECCA is committed to recognizing bilingualism and ensuring our Multilingual Learners receive support to achieve academic English as necessary preparation for future endeavors in college and career readiness.

TECCA relies on guidance from the Massachusetts Department of Secondary and Elementary Education (DESE) to ensure compliance with state and federal mandates as we strive to consistently advocate for educational rights of Language Learners. This vision begins with the [Academic Vision for all Language Learning Students](#). Our work is grounded in the belief that all students should experience high-quality education and reflects the Commonwealth’s commitment to the academic success and immense potential of students in our English Language Education (ELE) courses.

Each multilingual learner shall participate, consistent with section 1I of chapter 69, in the statewide assessment system. Students attending TECCA whose first language is not English and who have been identified as **Multilingual Learners (ML) are required to participate in the state testing program** for English Learners known as WIDA/ ACCESS testing. Initially, the WIDA screener is used to assess a student’s English language skills upon enrollment. The ACCESS test assesses a student’s English proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing and the results of this assessment are used to determine program placement. The Supervisor of ML Programs, along with

TECCA teachers, will work with families to schedule both initial screening and ACCESS testing days. Parents/Caretakers will be informed of their student's location and are responsible for transportation to the testing location. Additionally, transportation assistance is available upon request.

## **TECCA Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Caretaker (Learning Coach)**

TECCA applies the term "Caretaker" to the student's parent(s) and/or legal guardian(s) who enrolls the student and satisfies the student's enrollment requirements. All Caretakers are automatically given "Learning Coach" access (see below) in Connexus so they are able to perform the Learning Coach duties. Caretakers must agree to and sign the Parent/ Learning Coach Acknowledgement as part of the enrollment process. Caretakers have Learning Coach access and, in addition, other adults may be designated as a Learning Coach. School staff are not able to speak with any adults that are not verified on a student's account.

### **Learning Coach**

It is absolutely essential that the learning coach is an active participant in the student's learning experience. This is a daily commitment requiring effort, attention, and consistency in order to ensure student success. The Learning Coach is the adult who performs tasks such as recording attendance, reviewing lessons, providing supervision, ensuring engagement, and communicating with teachers on a regular basis. Each student will have at least one Learning Coach who is usually the student's Caretaker. As a reminder, during the enrollment process all Parent/Legal Guardians (Caretaker) agreed to the following Learning Coach responsibilities:

- I consent to my student(s) attending all mandatory meetings and standardized tests required by the school.
- I understand that I will be financially responsible for any school property that is provided to me, including property that becomes damaged, excluding normal wear and tear, is moved to another location, or is not returned when requested by the school. I have read and understand the Regulatory Program Description, including information about the need for adult supervision for students.
- I am responsible for ensuring that the student has a suitable place for schooling and will be physically available in the same location as the student during learning activities to the extent required by law.
- I will be responsible for ensuring that the student completes his or her work and makes adequate progress as defined by my student's teacher(s). I will schedule enough time in my day to support the student and submit the required work.
- I will mark the student absent or present for each school day according to the procedures established by the school.
- I agree to participate and ensure that the student participates in regular telephone, email, web conferencing (LiveLesson® presentations) or, if required, in-person contacts with a teacher, as directed by the school.
- I agree to use Connexus daily, when possible, and not less than three times per week.

## Learning Coach Central and Mentorship Program

TECCA also has a Learning Coach Mentor Program. If you would like to volunteer to be a Learning Coach Mentor, would like a mentor, and/or would like more information regarding our Learning Coach Mentorship Program, please contact our Coordinator of Student and Family Success, 774-335-5270. Learning Coaches can also prepare for their role by exploring the many family support resources that TECCA offers. Go to your Connexus Homepage, select the Links tab, then select Learning Coach Central to select from a variety of resources.

## Getting Ready for the School Year

Learning Coaches and students should check their “To Do” list on their homepage in Connexus every school day. Be sure to complete the assigned orientations and training you find there – this will help ensure that you and your student get off to a great start for the school year. The following suggestions will help you set up your student’s “Learning Area” for success:

- Dedicate a space, in a quiet area that is free of distractions, for keeping school materials and supplies organized.
- Create a daily routine and a weekly schedule that you and your student will follow to ensure success.
- Create a filing system for portfolio assessments, student work, and important paper and dedicate an area to showcase/display schoolwork

If you are waiting for a computer, review the set up requirements and make sure everything you need is in place, including Internet service, so when your computer arrives, you are ready to go. It is suggested that while you wait, you make every attempt to access a computer with internet access so you are able to attend school, which can be found at most public libraries. If there is an issue with access to a computer or internet make sure you notify the school principal. **Please note that it is expected that you access assignments and complete work in Connexus while you are waiting for your computer to be received.**

If you are using your own computer, take time to review the system requirements in “Connexus Help,” which can be accessed via the MORE tab on the Toolbar on your Connexus homepage to ensure you are set up properly. Enrollment begins as soon as you complete the final confirmation process. This means that your student should start working the day final confirmation is made; you do not need to wait for materials to arrive as they are all available online via Connexus. If you have any questions about how to access your virtual textbooks contact your student’s homeroom teacher. If you are experiencing ANY difficulty, please contact the Coordinator of Student and Family Success at 774-335-5270.


## Being a Student at TECCA

The student’s role at TECCA is to learn and grow to the best of their/your abilities. Therefore, each student will take age-appropriate individual responsibility for their own learning. This is accomplished by applying themselves to their studies in a focused and serious manner, working hard, being engaged in their lessons and activities, communicating with their teachers, and enjoying everything being a student at TECCA has to offer. Students are expected to adhere to the Honor

Code. See the Connections Academy Honor Code DataView for more information.

## **Student Help and Resources**

At TECCA, we want you to succeed! If you are having any issues, your primary contact is your homeroom teacher. You should always contact your student's homeroom teacher with any question or concern. Your Homeroom Teacher is the student/family's primary point of contact and can always point you in the appropriate direction. Homeroom Teachers are assigned upon enrollment, and will reach out to families to conduct a Welcome Call, which provides an orientation to all-things TECCA. Families may also utilize Connexus Help, which has a wealth of information. To get to Connexus Help, select the MORE tab on your toolbar in Connexus and then select the Help button. If you need Connexus login or Connexus technical support, please Technical Support at 800-382-6010 or send a Webmail message to Technical Support.

To get to know your student's teacher(s), view the Teacher Communication "Data View" to view their profile. To access this Data View, select your student's name from your homepage. From there, you will see the courses your student is taking. Select the  icon beside the teacher's name, and then select and view the teacher's Teacher Communication information.

## **Student Responsible Use of Technology Policy**

### **Student Responsible Use Guidelines**

Being part of the TECCA Community, students understand that the use of technology is a privilege for which they are responsible. When using any TECCA technology and online and digital technologies they are required to be a good digital citizen. Students acknowledge the following "I" statements:

- I am responsible for being prepared for learning.
- If provided a TECCA-owned laptop, I will report any breakage or technical issues to the Technology Help Desk when they occur and I will be provided a loaner if appropriate and available.
- While in LiveLesson, I will free myself of personal distractions and only use technology when instructed by my teacher.
- I will practice appropriate behavior and contributions on websites, social media, discussion boards, media sharing sites, and all other electronic communications, including new technology.
- I will be honest and respectful in all digital communication.
- I understand that what I do and post online must not disrupt school activities or compromise school safety and security of others.
- I will not spam TECCA webmail/email lists, which includes creating or forwarding chain letters or pyramid schemes of any type.
- While at the TECCA building or any TECCA sites, I will not knowingly and willfully use any devices or tools (cell phones, hotspots, VPNs) to bypass the TECCA network in

order to gain access to the Internet.

- I will use TECCA technology to access only approved educational content whether on or off school premises.

If I find Internet content with educational value that is blocked, I will follow the process to request access to those sites, I agree to:

- I will use TECCA technology to access only approved educational content.
- Ask a faculty member to submit the unblock request to their building principal.
- I will only install software approved by TECCA.
- I am responsible for keeping all personal information private.
- I will not share personal information about myself or others including, but not limited to, student ID number, names, home addresses, telephone numbers, birthdates, or visuals such as pictures, videos, and drawings.
- I will use caution when corresponding with people known only over the Internet.
- I will be aware of privacy settings on websites that I visit.
- I will be aware that it is my responsibility to check the data privacy agreement of any software tool or website that asks me to set up my own personal account before providing any personally identifiable information.
- I am aware the school district will take responsibility for verifying the data privacy agreement of any third party system in which the school district creates my student account.
- I will abide by all laws and all district data privacy and security policies.
- I am responsible for my passwords and my actions when using school-issued accounts.
- I will not share any school or district usernames and passwords with anyone. I will not access the account information of others.
- I will log out of unattended equipment and accounts in order to maintain privacy and security.
- I am responsible for my verbal, written, and artistic expression.
- I will use school appropriate language in all electronic communications including but not limited to email, social media posts, audio recordings, video conferencing, and artistic works.
- I am responsible for treating others with respect and dignity, including, but not limited to their work.
- I will not send and/or distribute hateful, discriminatory, illicit, or harassing digital communications or any communication that constitutes a criminal offense.
- I understand that bullying in any form, including cyberbullying, is unacceptable.
- I will ensure that I am properly using and citing copyrighted software and materials.
- I will not download illegally obtained music, software, apps, and other works.
- I understand all TECCA trademarks, logos and symbols are for school district use only.
- I am responsible for taking all reasonable care with the TECCA network and TECCA equipment.
- I understand that all school-issued technology is the property of TECCA.
- I understand that the school district may inspect, audit, and confiscate any TECCA device at any point in time.
- I understand that vandalism in any form including stickers is prohibited.



- I will respect my and others' use and access to the TECCA network and TECCA equipment.
- I will ensure that my actions protect TECCA technology.
- I understand that I should not tamper with, or attempt to bypass any of the controls in place (i.e., reinstall the operating system, modify the software image or disassemble the computer).
- I am responsible for the data I create and for protecting it.
- I understand the school district provides me with a Google account to save and store all my data and files.
- I understand that I will not have access to my school email and data after graduation or after leaving the district.
- I understand it is my responsibility to save any data or files that I create. I understand I should not save or store personal data or files on any device.
- I understand that the school district may reimage my TECCA-issued computer at any time to maintain the equipment in good working order.

### **Irresponsible Use of Technology**

Misuse of TECCA's technologies may result in restricted access. Failure to uphold the responsibilities listed above is misuse. Such misuse may also lead to disciplinary and/or legal action against students including suspension, expulsion, or criminal prosecution by government authorities. The district will tailor any disciplinary action to the specific issues related to each violation.

Disciplinary action may also be taken when a student intentionally directs at the school online speech that is understood by school officials to threaten, harass and intimidate a staff member or fellow student, even when such online action originated, and was disseminated, off-campus without the use of school resources.

### **Disclaimer**

TECCA makes no guarantees about the quality of the services provided and is not liable for any claims, losses, damages, costs, or other obligations arising from use of the network or district accounts.

TECCA also denies any liability for the accuracy or quality of the information obtained through user access. Any statement accessible online is understood to be the author's individual point of view and not that of the district, its affiliates, or employees. A great resource to help parents manage technology use is Common Sense Media (<https://www.commonsensemedia.org>).

## **Attending Field Trips and other School-Sponsored Events**

### **Field Trips**

Field trips and other school-sponsored events can be a valuable supplement to a student's educational experience. Any student wishing to attend a field trip or other school-sponsored event must submit a properly completed and signed PERMISSION FORM as well as a CONSENT AND RELEASE FORM. All students attending school field trips and events must be accompanied by an adult over the age of 18 unless they have permission to drive themselves or otherwise indicated. All forms pertaining to field trips and other school-sanctioned events can be found in the Virtual Library. It is imperative the school be kept up to date regarding students' allergies and/or other medical conditions when attending such events.

### **Students Traveling Independently to Sponsored Events**

First and foremost, we highly recommend to parents/legal guardians that students not be permitted to drive unaccompanied to TECCA sanctioned events. Preferred options include having parents, legal guardians or designated adults drive and supervise students, or having students use public transportation options.

In order to be able to drive/travel unaccompanied to a TECCA supervised events such as MCAS testing, Prom, or Graduation, students must meet the following guidelines:

1. Must possess a valid driver's license (to drive oneself)
2. Signed permission from their caretaker
3. Must have access to a currently registered, inspected, and insured vehicle
4. Must be a student in good standing, with good attendance, and with no disciplinary actions noted in the student's file
5. Obtain school permission to drive unaccompanied to Events

All students (and guests) are subject to TECCA's Student Handbook, Code of Conduct, and to follow the rules, regulations, and laws that govern student behavior. Administration may search, when reasonable suspicion exists, students' personal belongings, and/or the vehicle they traveled in, to ascertain a student's safety and well-being.

Students MAY be turned away at school events if the above criteria are not followed. In addition, it is the responsibility of the student who attends an Event without a parent, legal guardian, or designated adult to do the following:

- Obey all time schedules
- Obey all school rules including maintaining acceptable attendance and disciplinary standards.
- Adhere to school rules and procedures for Events.

\*If a student arrives late, privileges may be revoked. Under no circumstances shall students drive other students to an Event without parent and administrative approval. If a student nevertheless

permits another student or students to ride with him/her, Connections Academy shall not be liable for any injuries or damage to any parties. The student, the student's parent/legal guardian, and/or any insurance maintained by the parent/legal guardian and/or the student, shall be responsible for any and all injuries and/or any damage that may occur.

## Discipline and Due Process

### Overview

All students enrolled in TECCA are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the rules for the school, and Caretakers are expected to cooperate with the school staff in helping students to maintain this conduct. Student codes of conduct are set forth in this Supplement. School students are also guaranteed due process of law as required by the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, Massachusetts General Law Chapter 71, Sections 37H, 37H1/2 and 37H3/4, and 603 CMR 53.00. At all times, the school administrator may exercise discretion and judgment when considering disposition of discipline to students.

### Discipline Measures

TECCA exercises a progressive discipline model to support a student's awareness, understanding, and ultimate correction of negative behaviors. The common progression in this model is: 1) Warning; 2) Detention, 3) Conference with a Teacher/Administrator; 4) In-School Suspension; 5) Out-of-School Suspension; and for some offenses, 6) Expulsion.

Each level has associated conduct breach definitions and corresponding disciplinary actions that may occur. Depending on the seriousness of the offense, discipline may not always take the above listed progression. School administration retains the right to skip steps in the progression. The issuance of a Warning and/or the holding of a Teacher/Administrator Conference is documented in writing, becomes part of the student's internal record, but is NOT reported to outside educational agencies. Warnings are issued when a student demonstrates a breach of expected conduct, but not as serious as those listed under the detention, suspension, and/or expulsion categories in this Supplement.

\*Students are expected to use school appropriate language when using any school channels of communication including webmail, phone calls, texting and within LiveLesson with their teachers and their peers. Parents should take care to monitor their students' Connexus use and behavior in LiveLesson.

**Detention:** Should a student continue to exhibit the same behavior(s) that resulted in a warning, the student may be assigned a detention. This is a serious consequence in which the student is required to log in to a Teacher's or Administrator's LiveLesson Room for a designated period of time. During that time, the student must always be present (responding to questions/inquiries within a 10-minute period of time). The student may do classwork, receive extra help from teachers, and/or research strategies to assist the student in remediating the negative behaviors. Failure to report to

the detention, and/or failure to be responsive while in the detention Room will result in further disciplinary measures. Note: The assigning of a detention is provided in writing, becomes part of the student's internal record, but is NOT reported to outside educational agencies.

**In-School Suspension:** Should a student continue to exhibit the same behavior(s) that resulted in a Conference with an Administrator and/or detention, the student will be assigned a period of time of In-School Suspension. This is a serious consequence in which the student is required to log in to the Administrator's LiveLesson Room for a designated period of time.

During that time, the student must always be present (responding to questions/inquiries within a 10-minute period of time). The student may do classwork, receive extra help from teachers, and/or research strategies to assist the student in remediating the negative behaviors. Failure to report to the In-School Suspension Room, and/or failure to be responsive while in the In-School Suspension Room could result in an Out-of-School Suspension. Note: The assigning of In-School Suspension becomes part of the student's internal record, but is NOT reported to outside educational agencies.

For an in-school suspension, the principal or designee shall inform the student of the disciplinary offense charged and the basis for the charge, and provide the student an opportunity to dispute the charges and explain the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident. If the principal determines that the student committed the disciplinary offense, the principal shall inform the student of the length of the student's in-school suspension, which shall not exceed ten days, cumulatively or consecutively, in a school year.

On the same day as the in-school suspension decision, the principal or designee shall make reasonable efforts to notify the parent orally as soon as possible of the disciplinary offense, the reasons for concluding that the student committed the infraction, and the length of the in-school suspension. The principal or designee shall also invite the parent to a meeting to discuss the student's academic performance and behavior, strategies for student engagement, and possible responses to the behavior. Such a meeting shall be scheduled on the day of the suspension if possible, and if not, as soon thereafter as possible.

The principal or designee shall send written notice to the student and parent about the in-school suspension, including the reason and the length of the in-school suspension, and inviting the parent to a meeting with the principal, if such a meeting has not already occurred. The principal or designee shall deliver such notice on the day of the suspension by Connexus.

**Out-of-School Suspension:** Is defined as any time a student is temporarily removed from access to the Educational Management System (Connexus) and/or a school-sponsored program or activity ("locked out"). All student "Lockouts" are considered out-of-school suspensions. A suspension will become part of a student's permanent record, and reported to outside educational agencies upon request.

During a period of suspension as defined by the school principal, a student's permission to log on to their account. Student access to WebMail, the message boards, online clubs/activities, and/or all of Connexus is revoked. In such cases, the Learning Coach is responsible for logging on to Connexus through their account and obtaining the student's assignments, responding to WebMail, and recording assessment responses for the student. The student should continue with his or her schoolwork during a suspension but may only access the recorded LiveLessons during that period of time.

**Expulsion:** When a student is expelled, he or she is separated from the school for over ninety (90) days, or permanently, for disciplinary reasons. An expulsion will be documented in writing and will become part of a student's permanent record.

Violations that may lead to expulsion may include, but are not limited to, possession of firearms, dangerous weapons, bombs, or explosives, possession of, or sale of controlled substances or paraphernalia, or assault of staff.

Furthermore, if a student is charged with a felony or poses a serious threat to the school community, TECCA will take immediate action to comply with Massachusetts law regarding suspension and/or expulsion of such student. Suspensions or expulsions for children identified as special education or eligible under Section 504 follow all appropriate state and federal policies, regulations, and laws.

Violations that may lead to disciplinary action include, but are not limited to, the following breaches of conduct:

- Missed Meeting Obligation: Any occasion where a student does not attend an assigned meeting; appointment; detention; Saturday School; regularly scheduled homeroom check-in; in-school suspension
- Cheating on tests or daily work: A student who knowingly participates in copying, using another's work, and representing it as his or her own (for example, students
- Transmitting their work electronically for another student's use), or who provides other students with test answers, answer keys, or otherwise uses unauthorized materials in an assignment or assessment situation.
- Plagiarism: A student's use of another person's words, products, or ideas without proper acknowledgement of the original work with the intention of passing it off as his or her own. Plagiarism may occur deliberately (with the intention to deceive) or accidentally (due to poor referencing). It includes copying material from a book, copying-and-pasting information from the Internet, and getting family or friends to help with coursework.
- Unexcused absence: An unexcused absence is the absence of a student due to truancy, illegal employment or parental neglect.
- Illegal absence: Illegal absences are unexcused absences by a student who is under the age of 18 who are absent from school due to avoidable absences, parental neglect, illegal employment, unapproved family vacations, and truancy.
- Abusive conduct: A student who uses abusive language or engages in abusive conduct in the presence of others either in person or electronically/virtually.
- Bullying: Please see the definition in the handbook.
- Harassment: Please see the definition earlier in the handbook.
- Vandalism: A Student who intentionally damages or destroys school property or records (physical or electronic). In these instances, the school reserves the right to contact the proper law enforcement agencies.
- Theft and robbery: A student who takes money or other property (physical or electronic) with the intent to deprive another person or the school of that property. The threat or the use of force or violence is considered a serious breach of conduct. In these instances, the school reserves the right to contact the proper

law enforcement agency.

- Sexual harassment: A student who subjects another to any unwelcome sexual advances including verbal harassment, unwelcome or inappropriate touching, or suggestions, requests, or demands for sexual favors.
- Violation of acceptable use policy: Students who violate the acceptable use policy in one form or another are open to disciplinary action including suspension. This would include signing on as Caretakers.
- Disruption of the Schoolhouse: As TECCA maintains a top priority of ensuring a safe learning environment for all students, any student who acts in such a manner as to cause other students' learning to be negatively affected may be found to be a disruption to the schoolhouse and thus may be subject to discipline. This could involve inappropriate behavior, language, posts/behavior in a LiveLesson session and/or breakout room, discussion posts with a teacher, or other acts deemed and referred to a school administrator.
- Skipping School: Although TECCA offers our families and students a flexible schooling experience, there are some activities and events that are considered to be "mandatory," where attendance and participation are required. Such events include participation on the MCAS assessment and the expectation that students regularly attend all mutually agreed upon scheduled appointments. Students who do not participate in the MCAS assessment or those who do not regularly attend their scheduled appointments will be considered as "skipping school," and will be subject to disciplinary procedures.

### **Academic Integrity in a Virtual Setting**

In a virtual learning environment, maintaining the highest degree of academic integrity is of the utmost importance. Because students are taking assessments and submitting work not under the direct supervision of their teacher, students and caretakers/learning coaches should be hypersensitive to ensure the student is submitting their own work, expressing their own original ideas, and not utilizing unauthorized supports when producing and submitting answers.

Students in all grade levels (K through 12) and their Caretakers are required to review the Honor Code at the beginning of each school year and indicate their agreement to abide by it. Teachers will discuss the Honor Code and its meaning with their students and the students' Caretaker(s) at the beginning of the year. It is expected that all students will adhere to the Honor Code throughout the year and all schoolwork submitted to meet course or class requirements represents the original work of the student. In addition, students are expected to be proactive in ensuring they are adhering to the principles of academic honesty by: completing, and reviewing as needed, the Academic Honesty section of their Orientation agreeing to, and referring to as needed, the Connections Academy Honor Code using tools provided in Connexus to 'self-check' for academic honesty (e.g. plagiarism checking software), in accordance with school policy. Any form of academic dishonesty may lead to disciplinary action.

### **What is plagiarism?**

Duke University's definition of plagiarism:

“Plagiarism occurs when a student, with intent to deceive or with reckless disregard for proper scholarly procedures, presents any information, ideas or phrasing of another as if they were his/her own and/or does not give appropriate credit to the original source. Proper scholarly procedures require that all quoted material be identified by quotation marks or indentation on the page, and the source of information and ideas, if from another, must be identified and be attributed to that source. Students are responsible for learning proper scholarly procedures.”

(Duke University, “Citing Sources and Avoiding Plagiarism,”

<http://library.duke.edu/research/plagiarism/>)

Academic dishonesty in an online environment includes, but is not limited to:

- Submitting work of any kind that is not their own work.
- Plagiarize in any work (written, multimedia, oral, creative, etc.). If work content, other than commonly known facts, is not properly cited, attributed, or credited, the work may be determined to be plagiarism.
- Soliciting answers or post assessments, assignments, answers to assessments or assignments, or any other Connections Academy curricular materials on any media including social media or social sharing websites that can be seen by other students or other third parties, unless specifically instructed do so as part of the curriculum (e.g. a discussion assessment).
- Copying work from another student
- Copying work from an outside source when individual work is required, even with citation
- Purchasing a pre-written paper
- Letting someone else write a paper for you
- Paying someone else to write a paper for you
- Using information from online information services without proper citation
- Using a service that does the critical work for a student, including use of translation services in world language classes
- Presenting a paper or other work that is made up entirely, or almost entirely, of another’s work, even if appropriately cited.
- Giving or receiving unauthorized assistance on assessments.
- Learning Coaches, tutor, friend, parent, or anyone giving assistance on assessments.
- Presenting any forged document or signature to the school.
- Learning Coaches presenting any forged document or signature to the school.

### **Completing School Assessments**

When completing assessments on the computer or on paper, students and Learning Coaches should follow these simple guidelines to ensure that assessments are meaningful, worthwhile, and completed in accordance with the principles of academic honesty:

- Students should complete all assessments independently, and without assistance from their Learning Coach, any other persons, or any external resources. If any support is required of the Learning Coach, the assessment instructions will clearly indicate this.
- Assessments are “closed-book” unless otherwise specified by the course and/or teacher. They should be completed without the support of any outside resources such as textbooks, workbooks, lesson plans, dictionaries, the internet, or the student’s Learning Coach or any other individuals. In the rare instances where assessments are not closed- book, the

instructions will clearly specify that the student may use supporting materials. If you have any questions about what may or may not be appropriate for use during an assessment, contact your teacher.

- Skills Checks (K-5) should be completed by the Learning Coach. These short assessments provide an opportunity for the Learning Coach to share with the teacher his/ her observations about the student's progress.
- Skills Checks (6-12) should be completed by the student. These short assessments are used to assess the student's readiness for the lesson.

It is never appropriate for students or Learning Coaches to share with anyone, in any format, the contents of any Connections Academy assessments. Some interventions exercised as appropriate in the academic integrity process to support a clear understanding of academic integrity and meet student needs are as follows:

- School Honor Code- signed by students and caretakers
- Academic integrity workshops
- Student Instructional Support Plans
- Academic integrity reflections
- Teacher meetings
- Meetings with administration

Possible consequences for violating the academic integrity policy are as follows:

- Warning
- Teacher Detention
- Office Detention
- In-School-Suspension
- Out-of-School Suspension
- Note on your permanent record that will go to colleges
- Removal from National Honors Society and Student Council (if applicable)
- Prohibited from attending school events and/or activities
- Not passing a course
- Possible retention in grade level
- High School: Withdraw/Fail from a course and need to retake class for credit

## **Due Process for Suspensions**

### **Notice of Proposed Suspension**

Except in the case of an emergency removal or disciplinary offense defined under M.G.L. c. 71, §§37H or 37H½ or an in-school suspension as defined by 603 CMR 53.02(6), the school shall provide the student and parent/guardian with written and oral notice of the proposed out-of-school suspension, an opportunity to be heard at hearing, and the opportunity to participate at the hearing. Notice shall set forth in plain language:

- a) the disciplinary offense;



- b) the basis for the charge;
- c) the potential consequences, including the potential length of the student's suspension;
- d) the opportunity for the student to have a hearing with the principal concerning the proposed suspension, including the opportunity to dispute the charges and to present the student's explanation of the alleged incident, and for the parent/guardian to attend the hearing;
- e) the date, time, and location of the hearing;
- f) the right of the student and student's parent/guardian to interpreter services at the hearing if needed to participate; The principal shall make reasonable efforts to notify the parent/guardian orally of the opportunity to attend the hearing. In order to conduct a hearing without the parent/guardian present, the principal must be able to document reasonable efforts to include the parent/guardian. Reasonable effort is presumed if the principal sent written notice and documented at least two attempts to contact the parent/guardian in the manner specified by the parent/guardian for emergency situations. All written communications regarding notice of proposed suspension shall be either by hand delivery or delivered by first-class mail, certified mail, or email to address provided by the parent/guardian for school communications (or other method agreed to by the principal and parent/guardian) in English, and in the primary language in the home if other than English, or other means of communication where appropriate.

Any student suspended from school shall be afforded an opportunity to receive educational services and make academic progress.

### **Short-Term Suspensions: Hearing and Principal Determination**

A short-term suspension is the removal of the student from the school premises and regular classroom activities for ten (10) consecutive days or less. Out-of-school short-term suspensions which do not cumulatively over the course of the school year exceed ten (10) days of suspension shall be conducted in accordance with this section. Principal Hearing. The purpose of the hearing with the principal is to hear and consider information regarding the alleged incident for which the student may be suspended, provide the student an opportunity to dispute the charges and explain the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident, determine if the student has committed the disciplinary offense, the basis for the charge, and any other pertinent information. The student shall have an opportunity to present information, including mitigating facts. A parent/guardian present at the hearing shall have the opportunity to discuss the student's conduct and offer information, including mitigating circumstances.

Based on the available information, including mitigating circumstances, the principal will make a determination whether the student committed the disciplinary offense, and if so, the consequence. The principal will provide notification in writing of his/her determination in the form of an update to the student and parent/guardian, and provide reasons for the determination. If the student is suspended, the principal shall inform the parent/guardian of the type and duration of the suspension, and shall provide an opportunity for the student to make up assignments and other

school work as needed to make academic progress during the period of removal. If the student is in grades pre-k through 3, the principal shall send his/her determination to the superintendent and explain the reasons prior to imposing an out-of-school suspension, before the short-term suspension takes effect.

All written communications regarding the hearing and principal determination shall be either hand delivery or delivered by first-class mail, certified mail, or email to the address provided by the parent/guardian for school communications (or other method agreed to by the principal and parent/guardian) in English, and in the primary language in the home if other than English, or other means of communication where appropriate.

### **Long-term Suspensions: Hearing and Principal Determination**

A long-term suspension is the removal of a student from the school premises and regular classroom activities for more than ten (10) consecutive school days, or for more than ten (10) school days cumulatively for multiple disciplinary offenses in any school year. The purpose of the hearing with the principal is to hear and consider information regarding the alleged incident for which the student may be suspended, provide the student an opportunity to dispute the charges and explain the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident, determine if the student has committed the disciplinary offense, the basis for the charge, and any other pertinent information. The student shall have an opportunity to present information, including mitigating facts, that the principal will consider in determining whether alternatives to suspension such as loss of privileges, detention, an apology, a student contract, restitution, and/or probation are appropriate.

Additionally, the student shall have the following additional rights:

- i. In advance of the hearing, the opportunity to review the student's record and the documents upon which the principal may rely in making a determination to suspend the student or not;
- ii. The right to be represented by counsel or a lay person of the student's choice, at the student's and or parent's/guardian's expense;
- iii. The right to produce witnesses on his or her behalf and to present the student's explanation of the alleged incident, but the student may not be compelled to do so; and
- iv. The right to cross-examine witnesses presented by the school district;
- v. The right to request that the hearing be recorded by the principal. All participants shall be informed that the hearing is being recorded by audio. A copy of the audio recording will be provided to the student or parent/guardian upon request. Based on the evidence submitted at the hearing the principal shall make a determination as to whether the student committed the disciplinary offense, and, if so, after considering mitigating circumstances and alternatives to suspension (the use of evidence-based strategies and programs, such as mediation, conflict resolution, restorative justice, and positive interventions and supports) what remedy or consequence will be imposed. If the principal decides to impose a long-term suspension, the written determination shall:

- i. Identify the disciplinary offense, the date on which the hearing took place, and the participants at the hearing;
- ii. Set out key facts and conclusions reached by the principal;
- iii. Identify the length and effective date of the suspension, as well as a date of return to school;
- iv. Include notice of the student's opportunity to receive a specific list of education services to make academic progress during removal, and the contact information of a school member who can provide more detailed information.
- v. Inform the student of the right to appeal the principal's decision to the superintendent or his/her designee (only if a long-term suspension has been imposed) within five (5) calendar days, which may be extended by parent/guardian request in writing an additional seven (7) calendar days.

The long-term suspension will remain in effect unless and until the superintendent decides to reverse the principal's determination on appeal. If the student is in grades pre-k through grade 3, the principal shall send his/her determination to the superintendent and explain the reasons prior to imposing an out-of-school suspension, whether short-term or long-term, before the suspension takes effect.

All written communications regarding the hearing and principal determination shall be either hand delivery or delivered by first-class mail, certified mail, or email to the provided by the parent/guardian for school communications (or other method agreed to by the principal and parent/guardian) in English, and in the primary language in the home if other than English, or by other means of communication where appropriate.

### **Appeal of Long-Term Suspension**

A student who is placed on a long-term suspension shall have the right to appeal the principal's decision to the superintendent if properly and timely filed. A good faith effort shall be made to include the parent/guardian at the hearing. The appeal shall be held within three (3) school days of the appeal, unless the student or parent/guardian requests an extension of up to seven (7) additional calendar days, which the superintendent shall grant.

The student and parent/guardian shall have the same rights afforded at the long-term suspension principal hearing. Within five (5) calendar days of the hearing the superintendent shall issue his/her written decision which meets the criteria required of the principal's determination. If the superintendent determines the student committed the disciplinary offense, the superintendent may impose the same or a lesser consequence than that of the principal. The superintendent's decision shall be final.

## **Emergency Removal**

A student may be temporarily removed prior to notice and hearing when a student is charged with a disciplinary offense and the continued presence of the student poses a danger to persons or property, or materially and substantially disrupts the order of the school and, in the principal's judgment, there is no alternative available to alleviate the danger or disruption. The temporary removal shall not exceed two (2) school days, following the day of the emergency removal.

During the emergency removal the principal shall make immediate and reasonable efforts to orally notify the student and student's parent/guardian of the emergency removal and the reason for the emergency removal. The principal may not remove a student from school on an emergency basis for a disciplinary offense until adequate provisions have been made for the student's safety and transportation.

The principal shall also provide the due process requirements of written notice for suspensions and provide for a hearing which meets the due process requirements of a long-term suspension or short-term suspension, as applicable, within the two (2) school day time period, unless an extension of time for the hearing is otherwise agreed to by the principal, student, and parent/guardian.

A decision shall be rendered orally on the same day as the hearing, and in writing no later than the following school day. The decision shall meet all of the due process requirements of a principal's determination in a long-term suspension or short-term suspension, as applicable.

## **In-School Suspension under 603 CMR 53:02(6) & 603 CMR 53.10**

In-school suspension is defined as an alternative to short term suspension. The student is removed from regular classroom activities, but not the school premises, for not more than ten (10) consecutive school days, or no more than ten (10) school days cumulatively for multiple infractions over the course of the school year.

A Principal may impose an in-school suspension as defined above according to the following procedures: The principal shall inform the student of the disciplinary offense charged and the basis for the charge, and provide the student an opportunity to dispute the charges and explain the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident. If the principal determines that the student committed the disciplinary offense, the principal shall inform the student of the length of the student's in-school suspension, which shall not exceed ten (10) days, cumulatively or consecutively, in a school year.

On the same day as the in-school suspension decision, the principal shall make reasonable efforts to notify the parent orally of the disciplinary offense, the reasons for concluding that the student committed the infraction, and the length of the in-school suspension. The principal shall also invite the parent to a meeting to discuss the student's academic performance and behavior, strategies for student engagement, and possible responses to the behavior. Such meeting shall be scheduled on the

day of the suspension if possible, and if not, as soon thereafter as possible. If the principal is unable to reach the parent after making and documenting at least two (2) attempts to do so, such attempts shall constitute reasonable efforts for purposes of orally informing the parent of the in-school suspension.

The principal shall send written notice to the student and parent about the in-school suspension, including the reason and the length of the in-school suspension, and inviting the parent to a meeting with the principal for the purpose set forth above, if such meeting has not already occurred. The principal shall deliver such notice on the day of the suspension by hand-delivery, certified mail, first-class mail, email to an address provided by the parent for school communications, or by other method of delivery agreed to by the principal and the parent.

## **Discipline for Students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan**

### **Suspension of Special Education Students**

1. Students are expected to meet the requirements for behavior as set forth in this handbook. Chapter 71B of the Massachusetts General Laws requires that additional provisions be made for students who have been found by an evaluation team to have special needs and those whose program is described in an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or a 504 Plan of accommodations.
2. The following additional requirements apply to the discipline of special needs students:
  - a. A suspension of longer than 10 consecutive days, or a series of suspensions that are shorter than 10 consecutive days but constitute a pattern, are considered to represent a change in placement.
  - b. The IEP or 504 Plan for every special needs student will indicate whether the student can be expected to meet the regular discipline code or if the student's handicapping condition requires modification. Any modification will be described in the IEP or 504 Plan. The Principal (or designee) will notify the Special Education Office of the suspendable offense of a special needs student and a record will be kept of such notices.
  - c. When a suspension constitutes a change in placement of a student with special needs, the team will convene a meeting to review the IEP or 504 Plan, and all relevant information in the student's file, including teacher observations, information from the parent/guardian, and all formal evaluations that have already been completed, within 10 days of the decision to suspend, and determine the appropriateness of the student's placement or program, and whether the behavior is a manifestation of his or her disability. The team will consist of the Principal, the Director of Pupil Services, the parent/guardian, the Special Education Teacher, the Classroom Teacher, the School Nurse, and other members deemed relevant, (such as the school psychologist, parent/guardian invitees). The team will make a finding, a "Manifestation Determination", as to the relationship between the Student's misconduct and his/her handicapping condition.

If the team determines that the behavior is NOT a manifestation of the disability, then

the suspension or expulsion may go forward consistent with policies applied to any student without disabilities. The district must still offer services to enable the student to participate in the general education curriculum, and as appropriate, complete a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) and behavioral intervention services and modifications to address the behavior so that it does not recur.

If the Team determines that the behavior IS a manifestation of the disability, the team will complete an FBA and behavioral intervention plan if it has not already been done. The Team will then recommend to:

- 1) Design a modified program for the student, and/or;
- 2) Write an amendment to provide for the delivery of special education services during the suspension and any needed modification of the IEP or 504 Plan, relative to discipline code expectations.

d. Except when the student has been placed in an Interim Alternative Educational Setting (IAES) in the following instances, the student returns to the original placement unless the parents/guardians and district agree otherwise, or the hearing officer orders a new placement.

Regardless of the manifestation determination, the district may place the student in an interim alternative educational setting (IAES), as determined by the team, for up to 45 school days:

- 1) on its own authority if the behavior involves weapons, illegal drugs or another controlled substance, or the infliction of serious bodily injury on another person while at school or a school function, or considered case by case for unique circumstances; or
- 2) on the authority of a hearing officer. If the officer orders the alternative placement after the district provides evidence that the student is “substantially likely” to injure him/herself or others.

e. If the parent chooses to appeal or the school district requests a hearing because it believes that maintaining the student’s current placement is substantially likely to result in injury to the student or others, the student remains in the disciplinary placement, if any, until the decision of the hearing officer or the end of the period for the disciplinary action whichever comes first, unless the parent and the school district agree otherwise.

f. If, prior to the disciplinary action, a district had knowledge that the student may be a student with a disability, then the district makes all protections available to the student until and unless the student is subsequently determined not to be eligible.

The district may be considered to have prior knowledge if:

- 1) The parent/guardian had expressed concern in writing; or
- 2) The parent/guardian had requested an evaluation;
- 3) District staff had expressed directly to the special education director or other supervisory personnel, specific concerns about a pattern of behavior

demonstrated by the student.

The district may not be considered to have had prior knowledge if the parents/guardians had not consented to evaluation of the student or has refused special education services, or if an evaluation of the student has resulted in a determination of ineligibility.

g. If the district has no reason to consider the student disabled, and the parent/guardian requests an evaluation subsequent to the disciplinary action, the district will conduct an expedited evaluation to determine eligibility.

h. If the student is found eligible, then he/she receives all procedural protections subsequent to the finding of eligibility.

### **Expulsion**

As defined in 603 CMR 53.14 and in accordance with M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H or 37H1/2, when a student is expelled, he or she is separated from the school for over ninety days, or permanently, for disciplinary reasons. An expulsion will be documented in writing and will

become part of a student's permanent record. Violations that may lead to expulsion may include, but are not limited to, possession of firearms, dangerous weapons, bombs, or explosives, possession of controlled substances, or assault of educational staff. Furthermore, if a student is convicted of a felony or upon adjudication or admission in court of guilt with respect to such a felony or felony delinquency, felony charge or felony offense, or poses a serious threat to the school community, TECCA will take immediate action to comply with Massachusetts law regarding expulsion of such student. Expulsions for students with disabilities or eligible under Section 504 follow all appropriate state and federal policies, regulations, and laws. In the event that a student is expelled, an educational service plan will be created to ensure the student is afforded an opportunity to make academic progress. The educational service plan will describe the education services that TECCA will make available to students who are expelled from school. Education services shall be based on, and be provided in a manner consistent with, the academic standards and Massachusetts curriculum frameworks. The student and parent will be notified in English and the student's primary language, if other than English, of this plan in writing as required by the regulation (603 CMR 53.14). The notice will include a list of available services and the school district staff member who can provide more detailed information.

Felony complaint or issuance of felony delinquency complaint: Upon the issuance of a criminal complaint charging a student with a felony, or the issuance of a felony delinquency complaint against a student, the Principal may suspend a student for a period of time determined appropriate by the Principal. If the Principal determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school.

Felony conviction or adjudication/admission in court of guilt for a felony or felony

delinquency. The Principal may expel a student convicted of a felony, or has an adjudication or admission of guilt regarding a felony, if the Principal determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school.

### **Due Process for Expulsions**

Notice of Possible Expulsion: The school shall provide the student and parent/guardian with written and oral notice of the charges and of the reasons and evidence for expulsion before the expulsion takes effect, an opportunity to be heard at hearing, and the opportunity to participate at the hearing. Notice shall be set forth in plain language and include:

- a. the disciplinary offense;
- b. the basis for the charge;
- c. the right for students and parents to: bring counsel (at the student's expense), present evidence (through the student's own testimony or witnesses and through written evidence) and cross-examine witnesses presented by the school.;
- d. the date, time, and location of the hearing;
- e. the right of the student and student's parent/guardian to interpreter services at the hearing if needed to participate;

Hearing and Principal Determination as required in the case of Possible Expulsion

Principal Hearing: The purpose of the hearing with the principal is to hear and consider information regarding the alleged incident for which the student may be expelled, provide the student an opportunity to dispute the charges and explain the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident, determine if the student has committed the disciplinary offense, the basis for the charge, and any other pertinent information. The student shall have an opportunity to present information, including mitigating facts, that the principal will consider in determining whether alternatives to expulsion such as suspension, loss of privileges, detention, an apology, a student contract, restitution, and/or probation are appropriate. Additionally, the student and parent/guardian have the following rights:

- a. In advance of the hearing, the opportunity to review the student's record and the documents upon which the principal may rely in making a determination to expel the student or not;
- b. The right to be represented by counsel or a lay person of the student's choice, at the student's and or parent's/guardian's expense;
- c. The right to present evidence (through the student's own testimony or witnesses and through written evidence) of the student's explanation of the alleged incident,
- d. The right to cross-examine witnesses presented by the school;
- e. The right to request that the hearing be recorded by the principal. All participants shall be informed that the hearing is being recorded by audio. A copy of the audio recording will be provided to the student or parent/guardian upon request.



**Principal Determination:** Based on the evidence submitted at the hearing the principal shall make a determination as to whether the student committed the disciplinary offense, and, if so, after considering mitigating circumstances and alternatives to expulsion (the use of evidence-based strategies and programs, such as mediation, conflict resolution, restorative justice, and positive interventions and supports) what remedy or consequence will be imposed.

If the principal decides to impose an expulsion, the written determination shall:

- a. Identify the disciplinary offense, the date on which the hearing took place, and the participants at the hearing;
- b. Set out key facts and conclusions reached by the principal;
- c. Identify the length and effective date of the expulsion, as well as a date of return to school, if applicable.
- d. Include notice of the student's opportunity to receive a specific list of education services to make academic progress during the expulsion, and the contact information of a school member who can provide more detailed information.
- e. Inform the student of the right to appeal the principal's decision to the superintendent or his/her designee within ten calendar days (37H) or 5 calendar days (37H 1/2), which may be extended by parent/guardian request in writing an additional seven (7) calendar days.

The expulsion will remain in effect prior to any appeal hearing. If the student is in grades K through grade 3, the principal shall send his/her determination to the superintendent and explain the reasons prior to imposing an expulsion before the suspension takes effect.

All written communications regarding the hearing and principal determination shall be either hand delivery or delivered by first-class mail, certified mail, or email to the provided by the parent/guardian for school communications (or other method agreed to by the principal and parent/guardian) in English, and in the primary language in the home if other than English, or by other means of communication where appropriate.

### **Appeal of Expulsion**

A student who is expelled shall have the right to appeal the principal's decision to the superintendent if properly and timely filed. All efforts shall be made to include the parent/guardian at the hearing. The appeal shall be held within three (3) school days of the appeal, unless the student or parent/guardian requests an extension of up to seven (7) additional calendar days, which the superintendent shall grant.

The student and parent/guardian shall have the same rights afforded at the expulsion principal hearing (The subject matter of the appeal shall not be limited solely to a factual determination of whether the student has violated any provisions of section 37H). Within five (5) calendar days of the hearing the superintendent shall issue his/her written decision which meets the criteria required of the principal's determination. If the superintendent determines the student committed the disciplinary offense, the superintendent may impose the same or a lesser consequence than that of the principal. The superintendent's decision shall be the final decision with

regard to the expulsion. If the student moves to another district during the period of expulsion, the new district of residence shall either admit the student to its schools or provide educational services to the student in an education service plan.

## **Conduct, Due Process, Grievance, and Communication**

### **Bullying and other forms of Prohibited Behavior**

TECCA adheres to the Massachusetts anti-bullying laws that require that each bullying prevention and intervention plan recognize that certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting status, sexual orientation, mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. The plan must include specific steps that each school district shall take to support vulnerable students and to provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies needed to prevent or respond to bullying or harassment. Districts may also establish separate discrimination or harassment policies that include additional categories of students.

TECCA is committed to providing a safe, positive, productive, and nurturing educational environment for all of its students, and encourages the promotion of positive interpersonal relations among members of the school community. Harassment, discrimination, intimidation, bullying, cyber-bullying, and/or hazing toward any member of the school community or third party, whether by or toward any student, staff, Learning Coach, Caretaker, or other third parties, is strictly prohibited and will not be tolerated. Examples of such prohibited behavior include, but are not limited to, stalking, bullying/cyber bullying, intimidating, discrimination, menacing, coercion, name-calling, taunting, making threats, and hazing. This prohibition includes aggressive behavior; physical, verbal, and psychological abuse; and violence within a dating relationship. These types of behavior are forms of intimidation and harassment and are strictly prohibited, regardless of whether or not the target of the prohibited behavior are members of any legally protected group.

The following definitions are intended to provide guidance in assessing whether a particular behavior is a prohibited behavior. They are not exhaustive in their scope and are not intended to replace the intuition of the individual. When in doubt as to whether or not a particular suspected behavior is a prohibited behavior, you are urged to rule on the side of caution and report your concerns to the appropriate authority, as provided for in this policy.

**Discrimination:** treating any student, staff, Learning Coach, Caretaker, or other third parties differently or any other legally protected group, such as sex, sexual orientation, race, color, national origin, age, religion, marital status, or disability.

**Harassment:** any intentional behavior or course of conduct (whether written, verbal, graphic, or physical) directed at a specific person or group of persons that causes substantial physical and/or emotional distress or harm and is sufficiently severe, persistent, and/or pervasive that it creates an

intimidating, threatening, and/or abusive educational environment for the other person(s) and serves no legitimate purpose.

**Bullying:** the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of a school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a victim that: (i) causes physical or emotional harm to the victim or damage to the victim's property; (ii) places the victim in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of damage to his property; (iii) creates a hostile environment at school for the victim; (iv) infringes on the rights of the victim at school; or (v) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

**Cyber-bullying:** bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but shall not be limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo electronic or photo optical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communications.

Cyber-bullying shall also include (i) the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or (ii) the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying. Cyber-bullying shall also include the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons, if the distribution or posting creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying.

**Hazing:** any conduct or method of initiation into any student organization, whether on public or private property, which willfully or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any student or other person. Such conduct shall include whipping, beating, branding, forced calisthenics, exposure to the weather, forced consumption of any food, liquor, beverage, drug or other substance, or any other brutal treatment or forced physical activity which is likely to adversely affect the physical health or safety of any such student or other person, or which subjects such student or other person to extreme mental stress, including extended deprivation of sleep or rest or extended isolation. **Hazing - M.G.L C. 269 S. 17, 18, & 19 Section 17**

Whoever is a principal organizer or participator in the crime of hazing as defined herein shall be punished by a fine of not more than one thousand dollars or by imprisonment in the house of correction for not more than one hundred days, or by both such fine and imprisonment.

The term "hazing" as used in this section and in sections eighteen and nineteen shall mean any conduct or method of initiation into any student organization, whether on public or private property, which willfully and recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any student or other person.

Such conduct shall include whipping, beating, branding, forced calisthenics, exposure to the weather, forced consumption of any food, liquor, beverage, drug or other substance, or any other brutal treatment of forced physical activity which is likely to adversely affect the physical health or

safety of any such student or other person, or which subjects such student or other person to extreme mental stress, including extended deprivation of sleep or rest or extended isolation.

Notwithstanding any other provision of this section to the contrary, consent shall not be available as a defense to prosecution under this action.

### **Section 18**

Whoever knows that another person is the victim of hazing defined in section seventeen and is at the scene of such crime shall, to the extent that such person can do so without danger or peril to himself/herself or others, report such crime to an appropriate law enforcement official as soon as is reasonably practicable. Whoever fails to report such crime shall be punished by a fine of not more than five hundred dollars.

### **Section 19**

Each institution of secondary education and each public and private institution of post- secondary education shall issue to every student group, student team or student organization which is part of such institution or is recognized by the institution or permitted by the institution to use its name or facilities or is known by the institution to exist as an unaffiliated student group, student team or student organization, a copy of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen; provided, however, that an institution's compliance with this section's requirements that an institution issue copies of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen to unaffiliated student groups, teams or organizations shall not constitute evidence of the institution's recognition or endorsement of said unaffiliated student groups, teams or organizations.

Each such group, team or organization shall distribute a copy of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen to each of its members, plebes, pledges or applicants for membership. It shall be the duty of each such group, team or organization, acting through its designated officer, to deliver annually, to the institution an attested acknowledgement stating that such group, team or organization has received a copy of this section and said sections seventeen and eighteen, that each of its members, plebes, pledges, or applicants has received a copy of sections seventeen and eighteen, and that such group, team or organization understands and agrees to comply with the provisions of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen.

Each institution of secondary education and each public or private institution of post- secondary education shall, at least annually, before or at the start of enrollment, deliver to each person who enrolls as a full time student in such institution a copy of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen.

Each institution of secondary education and each public or private institution of post- secondary education shall file, at least annually, a report with the board of higher education and in the case of secondary institutions, the board of education, certifying that such institution has complied with its responsibility to inform student groups, teams or organizations and to notify each full time student enrolled by it of the provisions of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen and also certifying that said institution has adopted a disciplinary policy with regard to the organizers and participants of hazing, and that such policy has been set forth with appropriate emphasis in the student handbook or similar means of communicating the institution's policies to its students. The board of higher education and, in the case of secondary institutions, the board of education shall

promulgate regulations governing the content and frequency of such reports, and shall forthwith report to the attorney general any such institution which fails to make such report.

**Intimidation:** a course of behavior that instills fear or a sense of inadequacy.

**Violence within a dating relationship:** any behavior by a student exhibited towards that student's dating partner that is an attempt to gain and/or maintain power and/or control over a dating partner through violence, threats of violence, and/or physical, verbal, psychological, and/or mental abuse.

**Sexting:** knowingly using a computer, or any other device capable of electronic data transmission or distribution, to transmit or distribute to another minor any photograph or video which depicts nudity and is harmful to minors. Knowingly possessing a photograph or video that was transmitted or distributed by another minor as described above.

**Connexus Communication:** Students are expected to communicate respectfully using Webmail, in the LiveLesson Room (and Chat Pods) and in all school-related communications.

The school Administration (and School Board, if applicable) will not tolerate any gestures, comments, threats, or actions which (i) cause, threaten to cause, or, an objective and reasoned third-party would find was intended to cause, bodily harm or personal degradation, or (ii) creates, or an objective and reasoned third-party would determine was intended to create, an intimidating, threatening, or abusive environment for any student, staff member, member of the administration, parent or guardian, or other third-party.

This policy applies to all school-related activities and/or engagements, including, but not limited to, online school-related activities such as LiveLesson sessions, participation in clubs and activities, WebMail messages, text messages, discussions, telephonic communications, and message boards; and in-person activities, such as state testing, field trips, open houses, and any other in-person school-related activities on school property. This policy also applies to those activities or engagements which occur off school property if the student or employee is at any school-sponsored, school-approved, or school-related activity or function, such as field trips or events where students are under the school's control, in a school vehicle, where an employee is engaged in school business, or where the prohibited behavior is facilitated through the use of any school property or resources. This policy also applies at a location, activity, function or program that is not school-related, or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by the school, if the actions create a hostile environment at school for the victim, infringes on the rights of the victim at school or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Any person who believes that student, any other student, or other third-party, has been or is the recipient of any of the above-described prohibited behaviors should immediately report the situation to the school counselor, teacher, or Administrator.

The student may also report concerns to teachers and other school staff who will be responsible for notifying the appropriate school administrator or Board official (if applicable). Complaints about prohibited behavior against the school principal should be filed with the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent or the Board President (if applicable). Complaints about prohibited behavior against the Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent should be filed with the Board Chair or Board

Vice-Chair.

Every student is encouraged, and every staff member is required, to report any situation that they believe to be prohibited behavior. Reports may be made to those identified above. If a student or other individual believes there has been prohibited behavior, they should report it and allow the administration to determine the appropriate course of action. Any teacher, school administrator, or school staff member who does not timely make a written report of an incident of prohibited behavior shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action in accordance with the school's disciplinary process (found in the TEC Connections Academy & TECCA Union Collective Bargaining Agreement). Reports of prohibited conduct may be made anonymously; provided, however, that no disciplinary action shall be taken against a student solely on the basis of an anonymous report. A student who knowingly makes a false accusation shall be subject to disciplinary action.

All complaints about prohibited behavior shall be kept confidential and be promptly investigated. Investigations will be completed no later than thirty (30) work days from the date of complaint or report, unless impracticable. The investigation will include a private interview with the person filing the complaint and with witnesses. The investigation will also include an interview with the person alleged to have committed the prohibited conduct. Each party will have the opportunity to provide evidence and witnesses. During the pendency of the investigation, the principal will put into place interim safety measures to ensure the safety of the alleged victim.

The school principal or appropriate administrator shall prepare a written report of the investigation upon completion. Such a report shall include findings of fact, a determination of whether any prohibited behavior(s) were verified, and, when prohibited acts are verified, a recommendation for intervention, including disciplinary action, shall be in the report. Where appropriate, consistent with state and federal confidentiality requirements, written witness statements shall be attached to the report. When the target of the prohibited behavior is a student, the school shall provide that student with a written copy of the rights, protections, and support services available to him/her. If there is any evidence that the student has experienced physical harm as a result of the prohibited behavior, the school shall promptly communicate that information to the appropriate personnel, including, but not limited to, emergency personnel and /or law enforcement.

If the investigation finds an instance of harassment, discrimination, intimidation, bullying, dating violence, or any other prohibited behavior has occurred, it will result in prompt and appropriate remedial and/or disciplinary action in accordance with the school's disciplinary process and to restore safety to the victim. This may include up to suspension for students; up to discharge for employees; exclusion for Caretakers, guests, volunteers, and contractors; and removal from any official position and/or a request for a Board member(s) to resign. Individuals may also be referred to law enforcement officials.

Remedial and/or disciplinary action for students will follow the procedures outlined in the Student Handbook.

For complaints of discrimination or harassment, the parents of the alleged victim and the alleged aggressor will be notified of the outcome of the investigations in writing, regardless of the outcome. The report shall include:

- A statement of the allegations investigated;
- A summary of the steps taken to investigate the allegations;

- The findings of fact based on a preponderance of the evidence gathered;
- TECCA's conclusion of whether discrimination or harassment did or did not occur;
- The disposition of the complaint;
- The rationale for the disposition of the complaint; and
- If TECCA concluded discrimination or harassment occurred, a description of TECCA's response.

For all other prohibited conduct, when the prohibited conduct is substantiated or when appropriate, the target(s) of the prohibited behavior (and/or such target(s) Caretaker(s)) shall be notified of the findings of the investigation, and what action has been taken. The school principal or designee will also inform the parents or guardians of the victim about the department's problem resolution system and the process for seeking assistance or filing a claim through the problem resolution system. In providing such notification care shall be taken to respect the statutory privacy rights of the accused perpetrator of such harassment, intimidation, bullying, and/or dating violence. If disciplinary consequences are imposed against such student, a description of such discipline shall be included in the notification.

Retaliation against any person who reports, is thought to have reported, files a complaint, or otherwise participates in an investigation or inquiry concerning allegations of harassment, intimidation, bullying, dating violence, or any other prohibited behavior will not be tolerated, independent of whether a complaint is substantiated. Such retaliation shall be considered a serious violation of school policy, and suspected retaliation should be reported in the same manner as prohibited behavior. Making intentionally false reports about prohibited behavior will not be tolerated. Retaliation and intentionally false reports may result in disciplinary action as indicated above.

This policy shall not be interpreted as infringing upon the First Amendment rights of students (i.e., to prohibit a reasoned and civil exchange of opinions, or debate, that is conducted at appropriate times and places during the school day and is protected by State or Federal law). If a student is charged with a felony or poses a serious threat to the school community, TECCA will take immediate action to comply with Massachusetts law regarding suspension and/or expulsion of such student.

## **Complaints**

Students and/or their Caretakers may file written reports regarding any suspected prohibited behavior by completing the Report of Bullying, Aggressive, or Other Prohibited Behavior Form, found in the Forms section of the Virtual Library, and sending this to the school. Such reports should be reasonably specific including the person(s) involved, number of times and places of the alleged conduct, the target of the suspected prohibited behavior(s), and the names of any potential student or staff witnesses. Such reports may be filed with any school staff member or administrator, and they shall be promptly forwarded to the school principal for review, investigation, and action.

Students and/or their Caretakers may make informal complaints of conduct that they consider to be prohibited behavior(s) by verbal report to a teacher, school administrator, or other school personnel. Such informal complaints shall be reasonably specific including the person(s) involved, number of

times and places of the alleged conduct, the target of suspected prohibited behavior, and the names of any potential student or staff witnesses. A school staff member or administrator who received an informal complaint shall promptly document the complaint in writing by completing the Report of Bullying, Aggressive, or Other Prohibited Behavior Form, found in the Forms section of the Virtual Library. This written report shall be promptly forwarded by the school staff member and/or administrator to the building principal for review, investigation, and appropriate action.

In addition to the remedies at TECCA, an individual may file a formal complaint with the government agency or agencies set forth below. Using TECCA's complaint process does not prohibit you from filing a complaint with these agencies. Each of the agencies has a short time period for filing a claim. If you believe you have been subjected to harassment or discrimination, you may file a formal complaint with:

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Program Quality  
Assurance Services

75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148-4906

Phone: (781) 338-3700 FAX: (781) 338-3710

Email: [compliance@doe.mass.edu](mailto:compliance@doe.mass.edu)

The time period for filing a claim is one year from the action.

United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights ("OCR") 5 Post Office Square Boston,  
MA 02109

Phone: (617) 289-0111

The time period for filing a claim with the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights is 180 days.

## **Privacy and Confidentiality**

The School will respect the privacy of the complainant, the individual(s) against whom the complaint is filed, and the witnesses as much as possible, consistent with the school's legal obligations to investigate, to take appropriate action, and to conform to any discovery or disclosure obligations. All records generated under this policy and its related administrative guidelines shall be maintained as confidential to the extent permitted by law.

## **Caretaker Responsibility and Non Compliance**

The school is committed to ensuring parent satisfaction, and takes its responsibilities for the provision of educational services to the student very seriously. These school responsibilities are set out in the Parent/Legal Guardian Agreement (PLCA) which articulates expectations regarding contacting the family regularly, delivering educational materials and equipment, and providing accessible support.

The school will also ensure the family and student adhere to their responsibilities stated in the PLCA, and when necessary, will discipline, invoice, refer to collections, or take legal action against the family for a breach of the agreement or a school policy. Reasons for such disciplinary actions include, but are not limited to, failure to regularly communicate with the school through Connexus, telephone, WebMail, or other means of communication (including times where Caretaker and/or Learning Coach does not have access to Connexus), failure to attend mandatory state testing, failure to provide a Commonwealth of Massachusetts official immunization form, failure to return



materials, or disputing the materials and equipment policy such as invoices for computer damage.

If a Caretaker has concerns with the school's action or performance on any of the above- defined school responsibilities or disciplinary actions, he or she has the following remedies available:

Addressing Issues - For routine issues or for a first attempt at redress, contact the Main Office at (774) 315-5123.

For more serious issues and/or to address lack of resolution of the issue at a lower level, a detailed grievance procedure has been outlined above. All grievance proceedings will be conducted in a manner that protects the confidentiality of the parties and the facts. If a hearing is required for grievance proceedings, the parties will be provided with all due process procedures as required by law.

## **Bystanders**

Bullying involves not only those who are bullies and their targets/victims, but also the bystanders who are witnesses. TECCA recognizes that bystanders may be negatively affected by prohibited conduct, but that they also have the potential to play a positive role in responding to it.

Bystanders may be negatively affected in the following or other ways:

- Be afraid of being associated with the victim for fear of becoming a target of the prohibited conduct themselves
- Feel discomfort or fear at witnessing prohibited conduct
- Feel guilt, helplessness, or loss of control for not standing up to the aggressor
- Be drawn into the prohibited conduct by group pressure
- Or feel unsafe in the situation.

Conversely, bystanders may be able to help victims by doing the following:

- Ask for help from a trusted adult such as a teacher, principal, or other school official
- Help the person being targeted
- Create a distraction to focus attention on something else
- Try helping the person who is being targeted leave the scene by telling him/her that you need them to play a game or that an adult needs to see them
- Don't give prohibited behavior an audience as aggressors are often encouraged by the attention they receive, so don't support them by watching

Set an example

- Do not target others
- Do not encourage prohibited conduct
- Create posters against prohibited conduct
- Join an anti-bullying club
- Tell an aggressor that his/her actions are not funny
- Be a friend to the victim
- Spend time with the victim
- Talk to them; listen to them

- Tell them you think the prohibited conduct is bad
- Tell them to talk to a trusted adult for help.

TECCA's expectation is that student bystanders will report prohibited conduct to a school official or other appropriate adult in a timely manner. If it comes to the attention of the school leadership or staff that a student bystander did not report prohibited conduct, the school will initiate a conversation with the student regarding the school's expectations for bystanders.

Second and subsequent occurrences of non-reporting may subject the student to more serious disciplinary action.

Additionally, if it is determined by the school leadership that a student who was initially a bystander became actively involved in the prohibited conduct, s/he may be subject to disciplinary action as described in 9.3 Discipline and Due Process for Students in this Supplement.



**TEC Connections Academy (TECCA)  
Commonwealth Virtual School**

**TITLE IX - THE FINAL RULE**

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 protects people from discrimination based on sex in education programs or activities that receive federal funding. The U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) enforces Title IX and has created regulations relating to how schools are required to respond to reports of sexual harassment. The regulations are known as the *Final Rule*. The Title IX sexual harassment protections apply to TECCA that do or may receive Federal financial assistance.

Under the *Final Rule*, TECCA is required to promptly respond to and investigate every formal complaint of sexual harassment by a student. The *Final Rule* establishes an emphasis on restoring a student's access to TECCA's education program and/or sanctioned events and activities using supportive measures. Additionally, the *Final Rule* places the burden of proof on the school and requires a strict adherence to due process measures.

**Definitions**

**Actual Knowledge**

Notice of sexual harassment or allegations of sexual harassment to the Title IX Coordinator or any designated school official/employee with the authority to institute corrective measures. Under state law, school employees are mandatory reporters. In the K-12 environment any employee may receive notice of sexual harassment.

This standard is not met when the only person with actual knowledge is the respondent. Additionally, the ability or obligation to report sexual harassment or to inform a student how to make a report of sexual harassment, or having training on how to report sexual harassment does not qualify an individual to have the authority to institute corrective measures on behalf of the school.

**Complainant**

An individual who has alleged to be the victim of conduct that could constitute sexual harassment.

**Formal Complaint**

A document filed by the complainant or signed by the Title IX Coordinator alleging sexual harassment against a respondent and requesting an investigation of the alleged sexual harassment. A complainant must be an active student participating or attempting to participate in the education program provided by TECCA.

## **Respondent**

An individual who has been reported to be the perpetrator of conduct that may constitute sexual harassment.

## **Sexual Harassment**

Conduct on the basis of sex that satisfies one or more of the following:

- An employee of TECCA conditioning the provision of an aid, benefit, or service of the school on an individual's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct (quid pro quo).
- Unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive, and offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to the TECCA education program or sanctioned activity.
- Sexual assault as defined by 20 USC 1092(f)(6)(A)(v), dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking as defined by 34 USC 12291(a)(10), (8), (30).

## **Supportive Measures**

Non-disciplinary, non-punitive individualized services offered as appropriate, as reasonably available, free of charge to the complainant or the respondent before or after the filing of a formal complaint, as well as, instances where no formal complaint has been filed.

Supportive measures are designed to restore or preserve equal access to TECCA's education programs and sanctioned events and activities. Such measures are designed to protect the safety of all parties, the education environment, and ultimately deter sexual harassment.

Supportive measures may include:

- Counseling
- Deadline extensions or other course related adjustments, including changes to class schedule
- Modification of class schedules
- Restricted contact between parties

Supportive measures provided to the complainant and/or respondent will remain confidential to the extent that confidentiality would not impair the ability of the school to provide such measures.

Effective implementation of supportive measures is the responsibility of the Title IX Coordinator.

## **Title IX Coordinator**

The employee designated by TECCA to coordinate its efforts to comply with Title IX responsibilities will be referred to as the Title IX Coordinator. In addition to students and current employees, the Title IX Coordinator's contact information must be provided to prospective employees, parents or legal guardians, and all unions (if applicable).

The name or title, office address, e-mail address, and telephone number of the Title IX Coordinator shall be prominently posted on the school's website.

Any person, including a student's parent or guardian, may report sex discrimination and sexual harassment to the Title IX Coordinator in person, by mail, by telephone, or by email at any time, including non-business hours.

### **Formal Complaint**

A formal complaint of sexual harassment should be filed with the Title IX Coordinator in person, by mail, by electronic mail, or by phone using the contact information provided below:

Current Designated Title IX Coordinator-TECCA-Director of Human Resources  
School Address: 141 Mansion Drive Suite 300 East Walpole, MA 02032  
School Phone Number: (774) 315-5123

### **Initial Response**

The school must treat complainants and respondents equitably by offering supportive measures to a complainant and respondent. The grievance process outlined below is followed prior to imposing disciplinary sanctions or other actions outside supportive measures against a respondent.

The Title IX Coordinator must promptly contact the complainant to discuss the availability of supportive measures and consider the complainant's wishes with respect to the use of such supportive measures, inform the complainant of the availability of supportive measures regardless of filing a formal complaint, and explain the process for filing a complaint.

Anyone may report instances of sexual harassment or potential violations to the Title IX Coordinator; reports may be anonymous. However, formal complaints of sexual harassment can only be filed by the complainant or the Title IX Coordinator.

In instances where the respondent faces allegations of sexual harassment and is determined to be an immediate threat to the physical health or safety of a student or other individual, they may be removed upon completion of an individualized safety and risk assessment. If a student is removed under emergency conditions, instant notice will be provided, and the student will be afforded the opportunity to respond to the emergency removal. An employee respondent may be placed on administrative leave during the grievance process.

## **Required Grievance Procedures**

### **Formal Complaints**

TECCA is required to follow the grievance process defined by *the Final Rule* before disciplinary measures, not to include supportive measures, against the respondent are made. The procedures include:

All parties will be treated equitably through the remediation process. Remedies under *the Final Rule* are designed to restore or preserve equal access to TECCA's education program and sanctioned

events and activities.

An objective and thorough investigation and evaluation of the relevant evidence will be reviewed. This includes both evidence that can establish guilt (inculpatory) and evidence that can exonerate guilt (exculpatory).

Title IX Coordinators, investigators, decision makers, and any designee tasked to assist in the informal resolution process must be free of bias or conflicts of interest. Additionally, training must be completed on:

- the definition of sexual harassment;
- the scope of TECCA's education program or sanctioned events/activities;
- the process for investigation and grievance process including, hearings, appeals, and informal resolution processes;
- how to serve impartially, including by avoiding prejudgment of the facts at hand, conflicts of interest, and bias;
- any person identified as a decision maker must complete training on any technology used during any part of the grievance process, on issues of relevance of questions and evidence (including instances when questions and evidence arise that are not relevant regarding the complainant's sexual predisposition or previous sexual behaviors);
- any person identified as an investigator must complete training on issues of relevance to properly compose a report that summarizes the relevant evidence;
- all training materials must not rely on sex stereotypes and must promote objective investigations and final disciplinary decisions (adjudications) of formal complaints of sexual harassment.

A presumption the respondent is not responsible for the alleged conduct until the conclusion of the grievance process.

A reasonably prompt time frame for conclusion to the grievance process, filing and resolving appeals and informal resolutions processes, if offered. A temporary delay or the limited extension of time frames for good cause may be granted. In such instances, written notice outlining the reason for the delay shall be sent to all parties. Examples of good cause are the absence of a party, a party's advisor, or a witness; concurrent law enforcement activity; or the need for language assistance or to provide an accommodation of disabilities.

There will be a range of disciplinary sanctions and remedies that may be issued in the event responsibility of the respondent is determined.

The standard of evidence used may be the preponderance of evidence standard **or** the clear and convincing standard. The chosen standard must be used throughout the complaint process.

Include the procedures and permissible bases for the complainant and respondent to appeal. List the range of supportive measures available to complainants and respondents.

Disallow the use of questions or evidence that seek disclosure of information protected under a legally recognized privilege, unless waived by the party holding such privilege.

## **Notice**

If a formal complaint is made, written notice will be provided to all known parties. Included within the notice are the grievance process and the informal resolution process. Any details known at the time of report of sexual harassment may include the identities of the parties involved (if known), the conduct allegedly constituting sexual harassment, and the date and location of the alleged incident (if known). The notice will include a statement acknowledging the respondent is presumed not responsible until the conclusion of the grievance process. The parties may have an advisor who may inspect and review evidence. Such an advisor may be an attorney, though the presence of an attorney is not required. All parties will be afforded enough time to prepare. Finally, the notice will include that knowingly making false statements is against the student and employee code of conduct.

If, during an investigation, TECCA decides to investigate allegations not included in the original notice, the school will provide subsequent notice to include the additional allegations to all known parties.

## **Dismissal**

Under some circumstances, TECCA must dismiss a formal complaint of sexual harassment.

If the conduct did not occur while participating in the school's education program or sanctioned events or activities or did not occur in the United States, the complaint will be dismissed. However, the school may pursue action under the Code of Conduct Policy.

The school may dismiss the formal complaint if:

- a complainant notifies the Title IX Coordinator in writing wishing to withdraw the formal complaint and included allegations,
- the respondent is no longer enrolled, registered, or employed by TECCA, and
- specific circumstances prevent the school from gathering enough evidence to reach a determination regarding the formal complaint and/or allegations.

If conditions exist that require the school to dismiss the complaint, prompt written notice indicating a dismissal including any reason(s) must be sent to all parties.

## **Consolidation of Formal Complaints**

Consolidation of formal complaints to allegations of sexual harassment may occur under the following conditions due to the same facts or circumstances:

- against more than one respondent
- by more than one complainant against one or more respondents
- by one party against the other party

## **Investigation**

Under *the Final Rule*, the burden of proof and the burden of gathering evidence to make a determination as to responsibility of alleged sexual harassment falls to TECCA. Voluntary written consent must be obtained to use a party's physician, psychiatrist, psychologist or other professional treatment records.

An equal opportunity to present witnesses and evidence will be provided to all parties. The ability of either party to discuss the allegations investigated or gathered and present evidence may not be restricted.

All parties will be provided the same opportunities to have others present at any grievance proceeding. If either or both parties are joined by an advisor, including an attorney, at a proceeding, TECCA may limit or restrict their participation.

Written notice of the date, time, location, participants and purpose of all hearings, investigations, or any related meetings will be provided to all parties. Such notice shall permit enough preparation time for all parties.

Equal opportunity to inspect and review all evidence regardless of intent to rely upon said evidence in reaching the final determination will be provided to all parties. Prior to the investigative report, an itemized evidence list subject to review will be sent to all parties, including advisors/attorneys if applicable, in electronic format or hard copy. The parties will have ten (10) days to submit a written response. The response will be considered by the investigator prior to completing the investigative report. All evidence subject to inspection and review will be available at any hearing for reference and purposes of cross-examination.

Finally, an investigative report will be prepared to summarize the relevant evidence and sent in an electronic format or hard copy to all parties and their advisors/attorneys, if applicable. The report shall be sent to the relevant parties at least ten (10) days prior to a hearing to permit review and the opportunity to provide a written response.

### **Hearings**

***The Final Rule does not require hearings in the K-12 environment.***

The designated decision maker shall provide each party the opportunity to submit relevant written questions to any party or witness, permit time for parties to respond, and subsequently allow for limited follow-up questions.

It is an important distinction that questions and evidence relating to the complainant's sexual predisposition or prior sexual history are not considered relevant to the final determination.

The exceptions to this rule are if the pertinent information proves that someone other than the respondent committed the alleged sexual harassment, or if the evidence offered relates to specific incidents and prove consent between the complainant and respondent.

### **Determination**

The decision maker may not be an investigator or the Title IX Coordinator.

The decision maker will issue a written determination with respect to responsibility. Under *the Final Rule*, the determination must include:

- A description of the allegation that meets the definition of sexual harassment
- A full description of the procedural steps from receipt of the complaint through final



determination (notices, interviews, site visits, evidence gathering methods, and hearings)

- Findings of fact supporting the final determination
- Conclusions as to the application of the school's code of conduct and the known facts
- A statement and rationale for:
  - Each allegation and determination of responsibility
  - Disciplinary sanctions imposed on the respondent, if any
  - If remedies designed to restore or preserve equal access to TECCA's education program and/or sanctioned activities will be provided by the school to the complainant; any such remedies will be implemented by the Title IX Coordinator
- The school's allowable reasons and procedures for appeal (see Appeals section below)

The school shall issue written determination to all parties at the same time. The determination will be considered final when the time for filing a timely appeal has passed. If the allegations are appealed, the decision is considered final upon receipt of the final written determination.

### **Appeals**

Both the complainant and respondent have the option to appeal under the following circumstances:

- A procedural irregularity
- New evidence that could affect the outcome - not available prior to dismissal or determination
- Conflicts of interest or bias by the Title IX Coordinator, investigator(s), and/or decision maker(s)

The school may provide additional equitable circumstances as situations warrant. If a party wishes to appeal the determination, written notice will be provided to the other party that an appeal has been filed and provide procedures that apply to both parties. A new decision maker(s) will be appointed on appeal and such person will not have participated in the complaint prior to appeal, including investigators or the Title IX Coordinator.

Both parties will be permitted and equal opportunity to submit written statements supporting or opposing the outcome. A written decision will be provided to both parties at the same time and will indicate the result of the appeal and the rationale for the final determination.

### **Informal Resolution**

Informal resolutions may be offered once a formal complaint is filed.

Parties are not required to participate in an informal resolution however, the school may offer this option instead of a full investigation and determination. The school will disclose information about the informal resolution process, including the right to withdraw from the informal resolution process prior to an agreed resolution. Once a party withdraws from the informal resolution process, the grievance process of the formal complaint will resume.

If both parties wish to proceed with an informal resolution, a voluntary written consent must be obtained waiving the right to an investigation and adjudication of a formal complaint. A common example of informal resolution is mediation.

The informal resolution process may not be used in instances where the school's employee is the respondent of alleged sexual harassment against a student.

## **Recordkeeping**

The school shall maintain a complete record for seven (7) years relating to:

- All investigations, determinations regarding responsibility, disciplinary sanctions (respondent), and remedies (complainant); including audio/audiovisual recordings and/or transcripts
- Appeals and their result,
- Any informal resolutions and their result,
- Training materials used (posted publicly on the school's website), and
- Any actions, including supportive measures, in response to a formal complaint of sexual harassment.

The records shall provide a basis for the conclusion and show the response was not deliberately indifferent. Additionally, records should document the measures to restore or preserve equal access to TECCA's education program or sanctioned events and activities.

Further, records shall indicate the rationale for not providing the complainant with supportive measures, if applicable.

## **Retaliation**

Retaliation is prohibited. Prohibited behavior includes intimidating, threatening, coercing, or discriminating against anyone for the purpose of interfering with the rights protected by *the Final Rule*.

Specifically, retaliation because an individual made a report or complaint, testified, assisted, or participated or refused to participate in a Title IX investigation, proceeding, or hearing.

Retaliation against a student for code of conduct violations that arise from the same facts and circumstances as a report or complaint of sexual discrimination/harassment is also prohibited.

Speech protected by the First Amendment does not constitute retaliation.

The identity of parties and witnesses shall remain confidential except as permitted by FERPA.

Any party that makes a false statement in bad faith may be charged with a code of conduct violation.



**TEC Connections Academy (TECCA)  
Commonwealth Virtual School**

**TECCA Substance Use Prevention & Abuse Education Policy**

As required by state and federal law, TEC Connections Academy shall provide developmentally-appropriate drug, alcohol, and tobacco education and prevention programs in grades K-12.

The curriculum, instructional materials, and outcomes used in this program shall be recommended by the Superintendent and approved by the TECCA Board. The overarching goal of these programs shall be to develop in each student the ability to make intelligent, healthy, fact-based choices about drugs, alcohol or tobacco, and to develop the courage to stand by his/her own convictions. Such programs shall address the legal, social and health consequences of drug, alcohol and tobacco use or abuse. They shall include special instruction about the effects of these substances on the human body, and the emotional, psychological and social dangers of their use or abuse. Emphasis will be placed on substance abuse prevention and educating students of the dangers of substance abuse. A survey tool will be implemented to identify students at risk for addiction and overdose, and intervention plans and treatment opportunities will be readily available. Strategies to encourage communication regarding substance use prevention and education will be developed and communicated through our learning coach mentorship program, as well as, through the school counseling services department. This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis so applicable revisions can be made. This policy shall be posted on the district's website and notice shall be provided to all students and parents in accordance with state law. Additionally, the district shall file a copy of this policy with DESE in accordance with law in a manner requested by DESE.

**Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drug Use by Students Prohibited**

Students shall not, regardless of the quantity, use or consume, possess, buy or sell, or give away any beverage containing alcohol; any tobacco product, including vapor/E-cigarettes; marijuana; steroids; or any controlled substance. The TECCA Board prohibits the use or consumption by students of alcohol, tobacco products, or drugs on school property or at any school function.

Additionally, any student who is under the influence of drugs or alcoholic beverages prior to, or during, attendance at or participation in a school-sponsored activity, will be barred from that activity and may be subject to disciplinary action.

This policy shall be posted on the district's website and notice shall be provided to all students and

parents of this policy in accordance with state law. Additionally, the district shall file a copy of this policy with DESE in accordance with law in a manner requested by DESE.

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L.71:2A; 71:96; 272:40A

## **Extensions, Retention, Promotion, and Achievement**

### **Semester Deadline-Extension Policy**

All students are expected to complete all work by 3:30 pm on the final day of each semester. No extensions for work will be granted.

### **K-12 Portfolio Deadline Policy**

All students are expected to stay current with lessons and assessments as populated on their planner.

Although our school is flexible, some aspects of our schooling experience do need to have deadlines to ensure that students are actively engaged and submitting work with integrity. Portfolios that are not submitted within four weeks of the original due date on the planner receive zero credit. Be sure to reach out to your content teachers for any questions about portfolios.

### **Promotion and Retention (Elementary and Middle School Only)**

All students at TECCA are expected to:

- 1) Attend and participate in LiveLessons, or watch recordings if unable to attend live
- 2) Complete lessons on their planner and related grade level work and demonstrate proficiency on Massachusetts curriculum standards
- 3) Participate in STAR360 benchmark testing at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year
- 4) Attend check in calls with homeroom teachers regularly
- 5) Meet with content teachers on a semi-regular basis
- 6) Meet attendance requirements

In addition to the expectations above, students should achieve an overall course average equal to or greater than 60% for Semester A and B combined in English, Math, and Science, respectively.

Content teachers and homeroom teachers will have regular conversations throughout the school year with learning coaches to discuss student progress toward grade level proficiency and provide recommendations to support student achievement.

Alert of Retention: K-8 students who are being retained will be alerted in writing and/or by phone by May 15 of the given school year.

Appeal: K-8 Caretakers have the opportunity to appeal the retention decision by sending a written request via webmail to the principal with the reason(s) for the appeal, who will make the final promotion/retention determination.

## Honor Roll Criteria

Students at TECCA who meet the following criteria will earn a spot on the Honor Roll. Honor Roll certificates are distributed twice a year: once after the first semester ends and once after the second semester ends.

**High Honors:** Students must have an overall average of 95%, and no courses with a grade lower than a 90%

**First Honors:** Students must have an overall average of 90%, and no courses with a grade lower than an 85%

**Second Honors:** Students must have an overall average of 85%, and no courses with a grade lower than an 80%

## Services for Special Populations

### Enrollment Requirements and TECCA

The school is committed to ensuring parent satisfaction, and takes its responsibilities for the provision of educational services to the student very seriously. These school responsibilities are set out in the Parent/Legal Guardian Agreement (PLCA) which articulates expectations regarding contacting the family regularly, delivering educational materials and equipment, and providing accessible support. All special education services are provided virtually.

The school will also ensure the family and student adhere to their responsibilities stated in the PLCA, and when necessary, will discipline, invoice, refer to collections, or take legal action against the family for a breach of the agreement or a school policy. Reasons for such disciplinary actions include, but are not limited to, failure to regularly communicate with the school through Connexus, telephone, WebMail, or other means of communication (including times where Caretaker and/or Learning Coach does not have access to Connexus), failure to attend mandatory state testing, failure to provide a Commonwealth of Massachusetts official immunization form, failure to return materials, or disputing the materials and equipment policy such as invoices for computer damage.

If a Caretaker has concerns with the school's action or performance on any of the above- defined school responsibilities or disciplinary actions, he or she has the following remedies available:

Addressing Issues - For routine issues or for a first attempt at redress, contact the Main Office at (774) 315-5123.

For more serious issues and/or to address lack of resolution of the issue at a lower level, a detailed grievance procedure has been outlined above. All grievance proceedings will be conducted in a manner that protects the confidentiality of the parties and the facts. If a hearing is required for grievance proceedings, the parties will be provided with all due process procedures as required by law.

At the time of enrollment, all Caretakers who indicate their student has special needs will be asked to submit a copy of the student's most recent Individualized Education Program (IEP) and/or most recent evaluations. It is important that the IEP is current and complete, and that any educational assessments and evaluation reports that support the IEP are also submitted.

All documents are reviewed by the Director of Special Education, and if necessary, a member of the

special education staff contacts the family to discuss specific student needs or to clarify the information. A meeting will be convened within 30 school days of enrollment to discuss the presented IEP and how the “brick and mortar” IEP translates to a “virtual” IEP. As agreed upon by all stakeholders, it is mandatory for the student to attend all LiveLessons required to receive the special education services as outlined in the IEP. This includes both services within the general education setting as well as special education support LiveLessons. Failure to attend these LiveLessons will impact TECCA’s ability to provide your student with a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and will result in the need for TECCA to report the lack of FAPE to the Bureau of Special Education Appeals (BSEA). The student’s annual review date and re-evaluation date are noted, and once enrollment is complete the team begins to schedule IEP meetings, as necessary.

Additionally, at the time of enrollment, any parent/caretaker who indicates a home language other than English on the Home Language Survey (HLS) will be asked to sit for a language screener to determine English proficiency and eligibility for English Language Learner (ELL) services.

### **During the School Year**

At the beginning of the school year, the special education team ensures that general education teachers have access to the student IEPs. The teachers are made aware of each student’s special learning needs and are given guidance on how to make the necessary program accommodations.

For EL Students, the EL Coordinator will ensure that teachers have access to the students’ ACCESS scores and English proficiency levels, as well as provide guidance on how to support ELs in the general education setting. ELs annual ACCESS test scores will be used to determine continued enrollment in EL Services.

### **Participating in Services**

TECCA sometimes uses third party vendors to facilitate the completion of services. Appointments are made between the vendor and the family; once confirmed, TECCA considers that student’s appointment to be a scheduled class period. Note that TECCA is financially responsible for both the service, and the fee associated with a “no-show.” NOTE: Each vendor has its own cancellation policy AND contact number to report a cancellation. Families are responsible for contacting the provider in accordance with their Cancellation Policy. Failure to attend scheduled services may result in the need for TECCA to report the lack of FAPE to the Bureau of Special Education Appeals (BSEA). In addition, the Caretaker may be requested to attend a meeting with the Director of Special Education to discuss strategies to assist in improving meeting attendance.

### **Conducting IEP Meetings**

The special education team plans for and schedules all annual reviews and other IEP-related meetings. Families are given the opportunity to meet on a date and time that is mutually convenient. Although typically held virtually in the LiveLesson Meeting Room with accompanying Conference Line, the IEP meetings occur in compliance with all state and federal laws. In person IEP meetings can be scheduled upon request.

### **Special Education Related Services**

According to their IEPs, some students qualify to receive special education and related services. Due

to the virtual nature of the school, the services are typically provided virtually over the internet with real-time conferencing software. The IEP team ensures the service is provided in compliance with the IEP. The team locates and secures the provider and handles all contracting and financial issues, and coordinates the student's academic program. As agreed upon by all stakeholders, some services are provided to students in the LiveLesson Room. Any service that is scheduled "live" in the LiveLesson Room is mandatory for the student to attend in order for the student to receive the special education services as outlined in the IEP. This includes both services within the general education setting as well as special education support LiveLessons. Failure to attend these LiveLessons will impact TECCA's ability to provide your student with a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and will result in the need for TECCA to report the lack of FAPE to the Bureau of Special Education Appeals (BSEA).

### **New Referrals**

Throughout the year, both teachers and Learning Coaches may detect that a student is having difficulties with learning and they may believe there could be a need for special education assistance. The teacher may first help the Learning Coach implement a series of program accommodations or may refer the student to the school's Student Support Team (SST) who will support the student through a comprehensive Response to Intervention (RtI) Process. This team will meet and suggest additional strategies and considerations, and they will also work to gather more information about the student's learning history and profile. They may even consult with a member of the special education team. If after all the recommended strategies fail or if it is believed at any time that the student requires special education assistance, the team (along with the Caretaker) will refer to the school's special education team. Any response to interventions will not be used to delay a special education evaluation. Once the team receives the referral they will begin the process of determining if the student is in need of a special education evaluation, an IEP, and ultimately special education services.

### **Rehabilitation Act of 1073: Section 504**

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (the "Act"), is a federal statute designed to prohibit discrimination and to ensure that students with significant impairments have educational opportunities and benefits comparable to those of their non-impaired peers. A "504-Eligible Student" is a student who either (a) has, (b) has a record of having, or (c) is regarded as having, a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity. Section 504 plans are written for students who are impaired as defined in § 504 of the Act, and who require accommodations, services, and modifications to their instructional program (which may include services and/or assistive technology) to receive a free appropriate public education.

Caretakers of students with Section 504 plans seeking to enroll in the school are asked to submit a copy of the Section 504 plan during the enrollment and academic placement process. When a student enters the school with a Section 504 plan developed by a prior school, the school will review the plan and supporting documentation and comply with Section 504.

## **During the School Year**

At the beginning of the school year, the 504 Coordinator ensures that teachers have access to a student's 504 Plan. The teachers are made aware of each student's 504 Plan, and are given guidance on how to make the necessary program accommodations.

Students who have Section 504 plans will participate in the regular education environment, with the use of supplementary aides and services. The regular education teachers (with the support of the Section 504 coordinator and/or special education staff) will implement the provisions of Section 504 plans. A case manager will be assigned to notify teachers about the accommodations and to assist with and monitor implementation of the Section 504 plan.

Teachers will also have access to information, such as to accommodations and modifications on their homepage.

## **504 Eligibility Review**

The school will annually review students' 504 plans and continued eligibility every three years. For students who enter the School with an existing Section 504 plan, the Section 504 Coordinator will coordinate the review of the plan based on the following: when the plan was developed, the appropriateness of the plan for virtual schooling, changes to the student's impairment, etc.

## **Section 504 Accommodations**

According to their Section 504 plans, some students qualify for accommodations and modifications to their educational program. Due to the virtual nature of the school, the services are typically provided virtually over the internet with real-time conferencing software. The 504 Coordinator ensures the service is provided in compliance with the student's Section 504 plan.

## **New Referrals**

Throughout the year, both teachers and Learning Coaches may detect that a student is having difficulties with learning and they may believe there could be a need for accommodations and modifications, supplemental aides and services as required under Section 504. The teacher may first help the Learning Coach implement a series of recommendations to support the student or may refer the student to the school's Response to Intervention Team. This team will meet and suggest additional strategies and considerations, and they will also work to gather more information about the student's learning history and profile. They may even consult with a member of the 504 team. If after all the recommended strategies fail or if it is believed at any time that the student requires a 504 Plan, the team (along with the Caretaker) will refer to the school's 504 Coordinator. Any response to interventions will not be used to delay a 504 evaluation. Once the team receives the referral they will begin the process of determining if the student is in need of evaluations and a Section 504 plan.

Federal law requires TECCA to provide its students, regardless of disability, with an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from the school's education program. TECCA is committed



to providing its students with equal access to its education program. We provide students with accessibility through resources tailored to each student's individual abilities and needs, including assistive technologies and individualized support.

If your student is in need of assistance in order to fully participate in TECCA's education program, please contact the school's special education or the school's 504 Coordinator. You can also obtain 24- hour technical support by calling the Accessibility Hotline at 888-639-5960.



TEC Connections Academy (TECCA)  
Commonwealth Virtual School

**TECCA Department of Special Education**

Dear Families,

We would like to welcome you to the Special Education Department at TEC Connections Academy (TECCA). At TECCA, the Special Education Department, is responsible for implementing each students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) while we engage in the district's core values of being student centric, building a community, and fostering a school culture that provides a safe and encouraging learning environment with an emphasis on equity, inclusion, and dignity. This department is also responsible for implementing and monitoring Special Education Laws and Regulations.

This Wednesday, August 30th, we look forward to welcoming your child to TECCA. The Special Education Department is committed to working with students, and their families as a whole, to provide the best education for your child. Our staff will engage families and students to work in collaboration using a variety of resources; some of which include webmail, phone calls, texts, LiveLessons, and meetings as it pertains to your student's educational needs. It is highly recommended and encouraged that there be strong student and learning coach engagement. As a department we have found that those that fully engage have the best outcomes here at TECCA!

If you have any questions, please reach out to your child's teacher. They will be happy to answer your questions, or direct you to someone who can. Within the first couple of weeks, you will be getting an email from your child(ren)'s teacher introducing themselves as their service providers. Our department looks forward to getting to know your family and working closely with your student(s) to help them grow academically, emotionally as well as personally.

Sincerely,  
TECCA Department of Special Education

## Special Education Department Contact Information

\*For Special Education Educators, please see the school directory.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Person and Number</b>
Interim Director of Special Education	Ms. Marcia Berkowitz, 774-335-5405
Assistant Director of Special Education	Mrs. Megan Konikowski, 774-335-5323
Executive Assistant to Special Education	Mrs. Michelle Tucker, 774-335-5383
Administrative Assistant to Special Education	Ms. Cheyenne Reed, 774-335-5401
Special Education Supervisor - Elementary	Mr. Carl Tillona, 774-335-5523
Special Education Supervisor - Middle School	Mrs. Justine McKinnon, 774-335-5345
Special Education Supervisor- High School	Dr. Maureen Shaw, 774-335-5339
Intensive Reading Specialist	Mrs. Brianna Boyce, 774-335-5244

## Services for Special Education

### Enrollment Requirements and TECCA

TECCA School District is committed to providing special education services, accommodations and modifications to students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

TECCA offers the following services:

- Full Inclusion
- Small group instruction
- Consultation
- Counseling
- Related Services (Speech and Language, etc.).
- Compass Program a Substantially Separate Program for students with significant disabilities

What you need to know about enrolling students on IEPs at TECCA

- Provide with your enrollment documents the following information:
  - Copy of your child's last accepted IEP with signature
  - Copies of the most recent testing completed by your child's current district
  - Copies of progress reports
  - Any other relevant information that will assist TECCA in providing the best supports for your child

How can families gather this information?

- The easiest way to gather this information is by families requesting the student's current district for copies of all these documents. Documents can be shared by email, but no photographs. We need these documents to be in a complete form. Documents missing pages will not be accepted.

*The Special Education Laws and Regulations state:*

### *28.03: School District Administration and Personnel*

#### *(1) General Responsibilities of the School District.*

*(a) General. Each school district shall provide or arrange for the provision of special education and related services for eligible students in accordance with the provisions of state and federal law and regulation.*

- 1. The school district shall provide training to all school district staff, including general and special educators, administrators, and paraprofessionals, on the requirements of special education.*
- 2. The school district shall provide such staff training in analyzing and accommodating diverse learning needs of all students in the general education classroom.*
- 3. The school district shall provide such staff training in methods of collaboration among teachers, paraprofessionals, and teacher assistants to accommodate diverse learning needs.*
- 4. The district shall conduct, in cooperation with the parent advisory council, at least one workshop annually within the school district on the rights of students and their parents and guardians under state and federal special education laws.*

*(c) Change of residence.*

- 1. When an eligible student or student's family changes... school district to another, the last IEP written by the former school district and accepted by the parent shall be provided in a comparable setting without delay until a new IEP is developed and accepted.*

#### **Next Steps:**

- Upon receiving all documents a Supervisor of Special Education will review the information.
- A meeting will be scheduled as soon as possible after receiving the documents. Caretakers/Family and any student over 14 years old will be invited to attend the meeting.
  - What to expect in this meeting?
    - IEP and services written in the last accepted IEP will be reviewed and determined if they are appropriate, relevant and needed in a Virtual School setting and/or if they can be provided in such a setting.
    - The Team will also discuss any additional supports, accommodations, modifications that the student might need to increase academic success in a virtual setting.

### **Special Education Services at TECCA**

Due to the virtual nature of the school, the services are typically provided virtually over the internet with real-time conferencing software. The IEP team ensures the service is provided in compliance with the IEP. As agreed upon by all stakeholders, some services are provided to students in the LiveLesson Room. Any service that is scheduled "live" in the LiveLesson Room is mandatory for the student to attend in order for the student to receive the special education services as outlined in the IEP. This includes services within the general education setting and special education support

LiveLessons. Failure to attend these LiveLessons will impact TECCA's ability to provide your student with a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and will result in the need for TECCA to report the lack of FAPE to the Bureau of Special Education Appeals (BSEA).

Parental Safeguards for your review: [Parent Information - Special Education \(mass.edu\)](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/parent-information-special-education)

Important Facts:

- The law requires students to attend all special education services regardless if the school setting is virtual or brick and mortar.
- Caretakers/Families are strongly encouraged to create high expectations and discuss the importance of their student's attendance to these services.
- If a student does not participate in livelessons, is not able to make progress to meet IEP goals due to lack of engagement, the TEAM will reconvene to discuss student lack of progress and if services provided at TECCA are appropriate for the student. At this meeting student's overall attendance, engagement and academic progress will be gathered and discussed. If it is determined that TECCA is not able to support the student's current needs, the Team will discuss the benefits for the student to attend a brick and mortar setting.
- In the event that the TEAM determines that the student's needs cannot be addressed at TECCA, the student's district of residence will be contacted and invited to a meeting.
- The Caretaker/family and student must adhere to their responsibilities stated in the PLCA, and when necessary, will discipline, invoice, refer to collections, or take legal action against the family for a breach of the agreement or a school policy. Reasons for such disciplinary actions include, but are not limited to:
  - failure to regularly communicate with the school through Connexus, telephone, WebMail, or other means of communication (including times where Caretaker and/or Learning Coach does not have access to Connexus)
  - failure to attend mandatory state testing
  - failure to provide a Commonwealth of Massachusetts official immunization form
  - failure to return materials, or disputing the materials and equipment policy such as invoices for computer damage.

### **Conducting IEP Meetings**

All annual reviews and other IEP-related meetings by our staff. Families are given the opportunity to meet on a date and time that is mutually convenient. A confirmation of this date and time, as well as an attendance sheet for the meeting, is sent to the caretaker through their Connexus webmail account. Although typically held virtually in the LiveLesson Meeting Room with the accompanying Conference Line, the IEP meetings occur in compliance with all state and federal laws.

### **New Referrals: Students not receiving special education services**

- Throughout the year, both teachers and Learning Coaches may be concerned about a

student's difficulties accessing the curriculum learning.

- If so, the teacher first helps the Learning Coach implement a series of program accommodations or may refer the student to the school's Student Support Team (SST). If these accommodations demonstrate that the student is still struggling, the SST will implement some interventions. It is crucial that the student attends these interventions.
- Interventions tried will not delay the special education process.
- Consultations with the special education team will be considered during this time.
- If after recommended strategies prove not to be successful or if it is believed at any time that the student requires special education assistance, the team and/or Caretaker) may refer the student to be evaluated for special education services.
- What's next:
  - A consent to evaluate will be emailed to the Caregiver to sign.
  - The consent will indicate the testing that has been recommended for the student.
  - Caretaker signs the consent, accepting and agreeing to the testing.
  - If the caretaker does not agree with the testing and/or have any questions, they should contact the school's Special Education Supervisor.
  - The district has 30 school days to complete the assessments and 45 days to hold a team meeting. Please be advised that the days start counting after the consent has been signed.
  - All testing will be conducted virtually. It is imperative that Caretakers ensure student's availability and attendance.
  - Results of the testing will be shared with the Caretakers two days in advance of the team meeting.
  - At the meeting, testing reports will be discussed as well as the student's past academic history and any other relevant information.
  - The Team will determine:
    - if the student has a disability, or more than one,
    - if the student's lack of academic progress is due to these disabilities and no other circumstances, if so, determine eligibility for special education and services that are needed.
    - the team will determine a placement for such services.
    - lastly an IEP will be developed and sent to the Caretaker for signature.



TEC Connections Academy (TECCA)  
Commonwealth Virtual School

## TECCA Department of School Counseling Services



The mission of TECCA’s School Counseling Department is to provide a comprehensive program addressing the academic, social-emotional, and career/ post-secondary development needs of all TECCA students. Counselors at TECCA will work to ensure that all students have the skills necessary to identify, plan and achieve their individual goals. TECCA Counselors will strive to help students become model digital citizens and active participants in their school and community both on and offline.

### **School Counseling Services Administrative Directory**

\*For school counselor contact information, please see the school directory.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Person and Number</b>
Director of School Counseling Services	Mrs. Sarah Dalton, 774-335-5268
Assistant Director of School Counseling Services	Mrs. Savannah Audet, 774-335-5231



**TEC Connections Academy (TECCA)  
Commonwealth Virtual School**

## **TECCA Elementary School**

Hello TECCA Elementary School Families,

I would like to extend a warm welcome to all of you, and I am so thrilled that you will be a part of our school community for the 23-24 school year. For those of you who are returning to TECCA, welcome back! This is TECCA's 10th year as a virtual public school in Massachusetts, and our school has grown in so many ways since then. Each year, we strive to improve the quality of the virtual education we provide to our students, as well as an experience that supports the academic, social, and emotional well-being of students. High quality instruction, individualized supports, extracurricular activities and programming, virtual and in person field trips, and community building events, just to name a few, are all aspects of the TECCA program whose purpose is to support the holistic development of each student.

I encourage each of our students to become active participants in their learning by attending and participating in LiveLessons regularly, attending scheduled check-ins with teachers, asking questions, and being curious! Explore the elementary school clubs, and get to know your fellow classmates and teachers. I promise that the more our students put into being a part of the TECCA community, the more they will be amazed at the connections that can develop virtually.

Once again, welcome! I look forward to developing a positive partnership with you and embarking on a successful school year.

Sincerely,  
Principal Joubanian

## Elementary School Contact Information

Title	Person and Number
Principal	Mrs. Melanie Joubanian, 774-335-5314
Assistant Principal	Mrs. Nicole Buckley, 774-335-5248
Special Education Supervisor	Mr. Carl Tillona, 774-335-5523
Kindergarten Teacher	Mrs. Sarah Carrelas, 774-335-5253
Kindergarten Teacher	Ms. Tricia Simmons, 774-335-5386
Kindergarten Teacher	Ms. Dawn Summers, 774-335-5329
Kindergarten Special Education Teacher	Ms. Meghan Cleary, 774-335-5260
First Grade Teacher	Mrs. Sarah Powers, 774-335-5367
First Grade Teacher	Mrs. Cassandra Valley, 774-335-5394
First Grade Special Education Teacher	Mrs. Jamie Escalera, 774-335-5278
Second Grade Teacher	Mrs. Heather Penn, 774-335-5363
Second Grade Teacher	Mrs. Cristin Rinella, 774-335-5369
Second Grade Special Education Teacher	Mrs. Dana Hanseth, 774-335-5428
Third Grade Teacher	Mrs. Jessica Johnson, 774-335-5425
Third Grade Teacher	Mrs. Beth Morley, 774-335-5353
Third Grade Teacher	Miss Elizabeth Robin, 774-335-5370
Third Grade Special Education Teacher	Ms. Brooke Cote, 774-335-5265
Fourth Grade Teacher	Mr. Matthew Bartley, 774-335-5235
Fourth Grade Teacher	Ms. Lisa Doucette, 774-335-5273
Fourth Grade Teacher	Mrs. Rebecca Giordano, 774-335-5288
Fourth Grade Special Education Teacher	Ms. Sarah Martins, 774-335-5340
Fifth Grade Teacher	Mr. Will Goulart, 774-335-5291
Fifth Grade Teacher	Mrs. Christina Moore, 774-335-5350
Fifth Grade Teacher	Mr. Gabriel Silverman, 774-335-5385
Fifth Grade Teacher	Mrs. Brittany Warner, 774-335-5418
Fifth Grade Special Education Teacher	Mrs. Amber Storer, 774-335-5396
Art Teacher	Ms. Margaret Goldman, 774-335-5289
Music Teacher	Mrs. Heidi Iuliano, 774-335-5410
Physical Education Teacher	Mrs. Emily Manion, 774-335-5339
Reading Interventionist	Mrs. Stacey Beckwith, 774-335-5236
Math Interventionist	Mrs. Allison Rossi, 774-335-5373
Reading Specialist (Special Education)	Mrs. Brianna Boyce, 774-335-5244
SEL Teacher	Mrs. Katherine Grilli, 774-335-5295
Counseling (A-K)	Mrs. Kaitlyn Luz, 774-335-5335
Counseling (L-Z)	Ms. Tara Hansen, 774-335-5298
Multilingual Learners Teacher	Mrs. Angela Radez, 774-335-5368
Homeroom Teacher	Mrs. Melissa Bessey, 774-335-5238
Family Engagement Coordinator	Mrs. Mary Kiley, 774-335-5320

## **LiveLesson Attendance Expectations in the Elementary School**

### **Attendance**

Elementary Students at TECCA are expected to attend LiveLessons for their academic courses live. If unable to attend live due to outside circumstances, such as medical appointments or family emergencies, students are expected to watch the LiveLesson recording(s) for any missed lesson(s). The following are instances where students are required to attend LiveLessons live:

- Students receiving services through an Individualized Education Program(IEP). These services may include lessons in inclusion classes, special education learning support with special education teachers, related services such as speech/language, occupational therapy, and virtual counseling, etc.
- Students receiving intervention services in math and/or reading (WIN classes)
- Multilingual Learners receiving ESL Services are required to attend those services live.

Students who attend LiveLessons experience a much higher degree of success at TECCA, and caretakers are expected to support their students' attendance. LiveLesson attendance becomes a part of the student's record. Assignments given during LiveLesson are factored into a student's grade and are expected to be made up as missed work when a student watches the recording in lieu of attending the live session.

### **Dress Code**

Students and Caretakers should wear clothing appropriate for the virtual classroom.

### **Participation**

Students in whole group LiveLesson are expected to engage in and participate using the class activities provided by the teacher; i.e. Nearpod, breakout rooms (webcam/ mic), chat, microphone, WebCam, Google Forms, and other types of interactive activities.

Students in small groups are expected to use webcams and microphones for the duration of the lesson in order to participate fully in class. Using these tools both increases student engagement and ownership of learning and provides the teacher with a fuller picture of the student's strengths and areas for growth. Without full participation and engagement, teachers are unable to accurately assess student learning and provide differentiated instruction to support the student, as well provide recommendations for any further supports or interventions, such as through the Response to Intervention system.

Students who are not actively participating in LiveLesson will be removed from the LiveLesson room and receive a follow up webmail or phone call from their teacher. Students are encouraged to re-enter the LiveLesson room at any time.

If for any reason your student's microphone or webcam is not working, contact 1-888-569-0123 immediately to troubleshoot and ensure it is working properly, as these are critical tools for your student's learning.

## **Homeroom Check in Calls**

All students at TECCA are required to speak with their homeroom teachers at least once every two weeks and there are no exceptions to this requirement. Homeroom teachers will set up a mutually agreed upon time to conduct this call at the start of the school year or upon enrollment. Whenever possible, the biweekly check-in will be conducted in the LiveLesson room to allow for face to face interaction. If a student cannot make their scheduled check in call they are responsible for notifying their homeroom teacher and attending a re-scheduled check in call. Missed check in calls are akin to skipping class and can have disciplinary consequences as described in the face to face check in policy.

## **Elementary School Curriculum Based Check in Calls**

To ensure students are meeting grade level expectations, teachers will engage students in content based conversations at least once a month and work with students to assess their proficiency on state standards and related skills. Students are required to participate in these conversations, which are an important opportunity to provide students with feedback and recommendations to either help them reach proficiency or explore content material in greater depth. Students will receive a grade in the related course based on their participation. Additional work may be assigned (for example, in a Supplemental Instructional Support Program) should the student need additional practice in a content area or skill to meet proficiency. It is expected that students will engage in this program as assigned by the teacher.

## **Live Mandatory Face to Face Check-Ins**

### **Elementary School**

Elementary school students are expected to use their webcams at the start of each LiveLesson during the school day. Students who are not seen on camera after 5 days will be contacted by the Family Engagement Coordinator for an individual face to face check-in, follow up will continue via the truancy/engagement process as needed.

### **Kindergarten Enrollment**

Although kindergarten is not mandatory in Massachusetts (603 CMR 8.00), if you choose to enroll your kindergarten student at TECCA you are agreeing to the TECCA Elementary School participation and attendance requirements.

### **Assessments**

At the Elementary Level, Learning Coaches play a very active role in supporting the student in lesson completion and educational oversight. However, unless otherwise specified, students are to complete assessments independently. Learning coaches are permitted to encourage students to take their time and check their work. Otherwise, no prompting or coaching is permitted. It is imperative that student assessments accurately reflect the student's own work and skills, as this data could

potentially support a referral of the student to the Response to Intervention and/or Childfind processes.

### **Elementary Grading Policy**

Although our school is flexible, some aspects of our schooling experience do need to have deadlines to ensure that students are actively engaged and submitting work with integrity. Assignments that are not submitted within two weeks of their 'due date' on the planner will receive a temporary zero. Portfolios that are not submitted within two weeks of the implementation of the temporary zero become permanent. See details below.

Assignment Due Dates: Students will have two weeks after the due date to complete assignments. All assignments will be given a temp zero once they are two weeks overdue, which allows the student to still complete the assignment while also providing a true reflection of the student grade. Portfolios will be given a temporary zero two weeks after the due date, at which point the student will have two weeks to submit before the portfolio is given a permanent zero. No portfolios will be accepted more than four weeks after the original due date.

### **Grade Improvement**

Assessment Reset Policy: Teachers are not able to reset assessments (quick checks, quizzes, or tests) for students. Students should be prepared to take their time and finish an assessment once they begin. If a student is looking for grade improvement, teachers may offer alternate assignments, an opportunity to complete an oral assessment, or other activities to demonstrate benchmark understanding. Students are responsible for reaching out to their content teacher to arrange grade improvement opportunities. Grade improvement opportunities both individual and whole class are at the discretion of the teacher. Any assignment given for grade improvement will follow the assignment due date policy below.

Portfolio Resubmit Policy: Students may resubmit a portfolio up to one time. Prior to resubmitting the portfolio, students must demonstrate that they have completed additional work to improve the previously submitted portfolio. This can be a graphic organizer, LiveLesson with the teacher, additional practice/reteach pages, etc. Students will have two weeks to resubmit a portfolio from the date that feedback is provided by the teacher.



**TEC Connections Academy (TECCA)  
Commonwealth Virtual School**

**TECCA Middle School**



Hello TECCA Middle School Families:

I am so thrilled that you have chosen TECCA Middle School! We are a diverse and dynamic community where our fantastic faculty and staff work to cultivate a high-quality and unique Middle School experience for our students. I am confident that you will find a home in the TECCA Middle School community this year.

As an online virtual public middle school, students have the unique opportunity to learn outside of the traditional classrooms and will be engaging in high-quality synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities. Our unique virtual school allows for students to learn together from across the Commonwealth. The diversity this brings to our school enhances the academic and social experiences for our middle school students.

I encourage you to get involved in all of the wonderful programs. In addition to our excellent core academic courses, the Middle School also offers a vibrant and unique Advisory program, course elective opportunities, school-sponsored clubs, community events and field trips!

Please thoroughly review our Student Handbook as it contains a wealth of information regarding the TECCA Middle School experience. I wish you a wonderful TECCA Middle School journey!

Warmest Regards,

TECCA Middle School Administration

## Middle School Contact Information

Title	Person and Number
<b>Administration</b>	
Middle School Principal	Mrs. Jessica Hunter, 774-335-5309
Interim Middle School Assistant Principal	Mrs. Laura Hohengasser, 774-335-5305
<b>Specialized Services</b>	
Middle School Special Education Supervisor	Mrs. Justine McKinnon, 774-335-5345
Director of 504s and Student Analytics	Mrs. Meredith Arieta-Heaney, 774-335-5228
<b>Counseling</b>	
Counselor for Students with Last Names A-G	Ms. Janily Lopez, 774-335-5333
Counselor for Students with Last Names H-N	Ms. Carly Wilks, 774-335-5397
Counselor for Students with Last Names O-Z	Mrs. Claire Horn, 774-335-5306
<b>Engagement</b>	
Engagement/Truancy Coordinator	Mrs. Kathy Keady, 774-335-5316
*Please see 2023-2024 Staff Teams presentation located in the Virtual Library for the most up-to-date teacher team assignments.	

## Connections Honor Code 6-8

The mission of Connections Academy Schools is to help each student maximize their academic potential, and we expect academic honesty to be a core value for all students, Caretakers, and staff. Students who are academically dishonest do not learn what they need to succeed and achieve their goals. Therefore, we require all students to sign the Honor Code, indicating they agree to abide by Connections Academy's expectations for academic honesty.

We require Caretakers to agree to the Honor Code since they are an integral part of their student's learning experience.

### Connections Academy Honor Code

I agree that I will ...

- Read (or have read to me) the contents of both the Student Handbook: General Portion and my school's Handbook Supplement
- Value learning above my grades or scores
- Always value and exhibit honesty
- Be well-informed about plagiarism and cheating, and not use "lack of knowledge" about either as a reason for engaging in plagiarism or cheating
- Never give my work or answers to assessments (tests, quizzes, etc.) to other students to submit as their own
- Never share educational material found within Pearson Online Classroom or provided by my

school with other students. This includes posting assignments and/or answers online.

- Never plagiarize written, oral, or creative work, and never copy (plagiarize) others' work or submit work of any kind that is not my own
- Never post or otherwise share assessment(s) and/or answers on the Internet or in other public places or otherwise share assessment answers
- Never search for and use assessment answers on the Internet or in other public places, including using translation services for language courses
- Never give or receive unauthorized assistance on assessments, including from my friends/peers, Learning Coach, or any others
- Understand that all assessments are "closed-book" meaning I need to take assessments based on the knowledge in my head, and not use any other sources
- Adhere to all Connections Academy Student Conduct guidelines for proper use of the Internet and Connections' equipment and materials provided to me
- Accept the consequences, including disciplinary action, of breaking this Honor Code, (More information on Discipline and Due Process can be found in the School Specific Handbook)
- Never provide a forged document or signature to the School or Connections

I understand this Honor Code is not limited only to the examples listed above. By checking the box below, I confirm that I have read (or had read to me), and agree to abide by, this Honor Code and the expectation for academic honesty.

For the 2023-2024 School Year, by checking this box, as a student:

I confirm that I have read or had read to me, understand, and agree to abide by the above

Honor Code.

For the 2023-2024 School Year, by checking this box, as a Caretaker/Learning Coach:

I confirm that I have read, understand, and agree to abide by the above Honor Code.

### Temporary Location Change

A "Temporary Location Change" request must be submitted if the student is expected to travel or relocate away from the student's primary Massachusetts residence for more than two (2) weeks. For this type of location change, **the Caretaker must contact their homeroom teacher to initiate the Location Transfer Request Form process which will be completed via DocuSign.** Once this form is completed by the Caretaker via DocuSign, it will be submitted automatically to the Principal or

Principal's designee for approval. These forms must be completed and submitted a month prior to the relocation. In emergency situations pertaining to relocation, please contact the Principal or Assistant Principal immediately. No location transfer requests will be granted beyond one semester's length and students must be present in Massachusetts for MCAS testing with no exception.

In addition, traveling students agree to abide by all contacts and attendance requirements expected of students at TECCA, as outlined in this student handbook. This includes attendance at daily face to

face check ins, homeroom check in appointments, any required LiveLessons, timely lesson

completion, and a total of 28 hours of weekly attendance to be entered by the Caretaker/Learning Coach. Caretakers/Learning Coaches must be available and reachable by phone to address any concerns regarding the above requirements. Students who go into our engagement process while they have an active Location Transfer Request will be considered to be in breach of contract and need to return to Massachusetts or otherwise be withdrawn.

**Please Note:** TECCA reserves the right to further verify that the family’s residence remains in Massachusetts. Please reference the “Residency” section of this Handbook for more information.

### **Students Enrolling After the Start of the School Year**

All students who enroll after the first day of a new semester will be skipped ahead to present day and not responsible for completing any school work that was assigned prior to enrollment. Students are encouraged to review coursework covered prior to their enrollment to ensure their understanding and success. Students and Caretakers/Learning Coaches are expected to complete a Getting Started orientation course within 1 week of enrolling.

### **Middle School Students Enrolling after the Start of the School Year**

Students may enroll after the start of the school year, provided that there is space available in the school at the time all enrollment tasks are completed. Families should contact the Enrollment Department at 1-800-382-6010 for details on the school’s enrollment capacity at the given time of application or inquiry. Families enrolling mid-year are subject to all the same enrollment requirements as families who enroll prior to the start of the school year. Enrollment may be closed before the end of the school year if the school reaches its enrollment cap set by the Commonwealth Virtual School Terms of Certificate awarded by the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

### **Middle School Advisory Program**

#### **Overview**

TECCA Middle School is committed to supporting students’ academic and social-emotional development. In addition to their academic courses, TECCA also expects students to become engaged in our unique Advisory program based on the Responsive Classroom model. At the beginning of each academic year, students receive information about their Advisory assignments. During these sessions, students are encouraged to build relationships with their peers and to develop a relationship with their Advisory teacher while engaging in developmentally appropriate lessons and discussions.

## **Paper Tutoring Service in the Middle School**

### **Overview**

TECCA Middle School students are strongly encouraged to utilize Paper Tutoring when they are in need of further academic support outside of school hours. Paper offers an on-demand, 24-hour live virtual one-to-one tutoring service. Here is a [video resource](#) for using [Paper Tutoring](#). PaperLive and PaperMath are new services with other new features including Voice Typing, Voice Notes, and Text Reading. Teachers automatically receive a transcript following each student's tutoring sessions, and several of our teachers offer custom grading points to students who utilize Paper tutoring meaningfully to support their learning in the course.

## **LiveLesson Attendance Expectations at the Middle School**

### **Attendance**

Middle School students at TECCA are expected to attend all LiveLessons. We strongly recommend attending all Core academic courses live. If unable to attend live due to outside circumstances, students are expected to watch the LiveLesson recordings for any missed lessons and will also be responsible for submitting the required corresponding assignments completed or assigned during the LiveLessons. Students who attend LiveLessons experience a much higher degree of success at TECCA, and learning coaches are expected to support their students' attendance at LiveLessons.

Teachers at TECCA use LiveLesson attendance and participation toward the overall grade in the corresponding course. Students receiving school-based enrichment or intervention services (non-Special Education) blocks for Math, Reading, or Social-Emotional support sessions, these sessions must be attended live at the scheduled time and recordings will not be available. Students participating in Advisory, Enrichment blocks and Multilingual Learners enrolled in English language development courses are required to attend classes live.

Students receiving Special Education services through an Individualized Education Program (IEP) are required to attend those services live. These services may include lessons in inclusion classes, special education learning supports with special education teachers, related services such as speech/language, occupational therapy, and virtual counseling, etc.

LiveLesson attendance becomes a part of the student's record.

### **LiveLesson Participation**

Students are strongly encouraged to use their webcams and microphones during LiveLessons when teachers invite them to do so. Using these tools both increases student engagement and ownership of learning and provides the teacher with a fuller picture of the student's strengths and areas for growth. Without full participation and engagement, it is difficult for teachers to accurately assess student learning and provide differentiated instruction to support the student, as well provide

recommendations for any further supports or interventions, such as through the Response to Intervention system.

Students in whole group LiveLesson are expected to engage in and participate using the class activities provided by the teacher; i.e. Nearpod, breakout rooms (webcam/ mic), chat, microphone, WebCam, Google Forms, and other types of interactive activities.

If for any reason your student's microphone or webcam is not working, contact school support immediately to troubleshoot and ensure it is working properly, as these are critical tools for your student's learning.

## **Contact Requirements**

### **Webcams and Microphones**

All TECCA students are expected to be available to meet with teachers in the LiveLesson room. As a part of these meetings, students may be asked to use their webcam and/ microphone to demonstrate learning. Please reach out to your homeroom teacher if you do not have a computer that supports these features.

### **Homeroom Check in Calls**

All students at TECCA are required to speak with their homeroom teachers at least once every two weeks and there are no exceptions to this requirement. Homeroom teachers will set up a mutually agreed upon time to conduct this call at the start of the school year or upon enrollment. Whenever possible, the biweekly check-in will be conducted in the LiveLesson room to allow for face to face interaction. If a student cannot make their scheduled check in call they are responsible for notifying their homeroom teacher and attending a re-scheduled check in call. Missed check in calls are akin to skipping class and can have disciplinary consequences as described in the face to face check in policy. We recommend that Caretaker/Learning Coaches are present during these calls as homeroom teachers will review progress and set learning/engagement goals that the Caretaker/Learning Coach will be responsible for supporting.

### **Middle School Curriculum-Based Check-in Calls**

TECCA recognizes that students can (and should) demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways. As part of each 6-8 core academic course semester grade, all students are required to demonstrate their learning via a curriculum-based check- in call for each of their core courses once per semester. These calls are centered around discussing the course content and are conducted either on the phone or in the teacher's LiveLesson room. The teacher check-in call counts as an assessment grade. Students will receive a 100% for engaging in content-based discussion in their teacher check-in call. Alternatively, if a student does not participate in the required teacher check-in

call with each teacher every semester, they will receive a Zero in their gradebook. Additional work may

be assigned (for example, in a Supplemental Instructional Support Program) should the student need additional practice in a content area or skill to meet proficiency. It is expected that students will engage in this program as assigned by the teacher.

### **Live Mandatory Face to Face Check-Ins**

For the safety of all students and as required by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, students are required to attend virtual face to face check-ins, which occur daily during LiveLesson classes, during a special check-in time, and/or during the biweekly contact. Students are required to attend these face to face check-ins on a regular basis. All biweekly check-in calls will be completed in the LiveLesson room to allow for face to face interaction between the student and homeroom teacher. Homeroom teachers will reach out via phone to students who miss their scheduled time. Please refer to the following face to face check in expectations for each school listed below:

### **Web Cams**

Middle school students are expected to use their WebCams during a designated daily check-in block that will take place during school hours (8AM-3:30 PM). Students who are not seen on camera after 5 days will be contacted by the Attendance Clerk for an individual face to face check-in with additional follow up via the truancy/engagement process as needed.

\*All Face to Face check-in attendance will be monitored in a google sheet, with only those who *do not* attend receiving a log update.

### **Truancy**

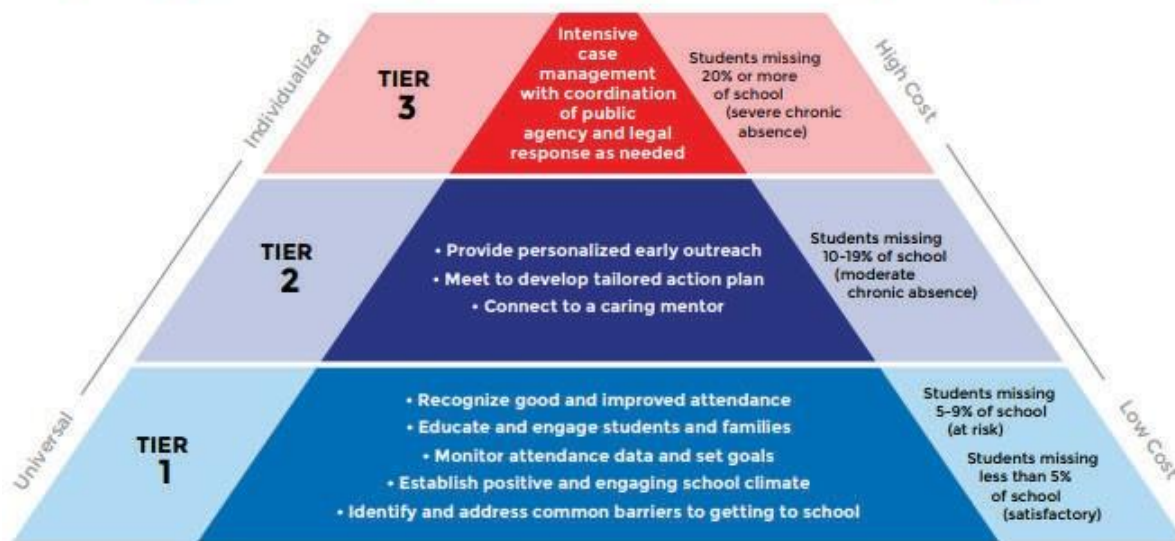
Caretakers and students are jointly responsible for ensuring that students meet TECCA's attendance requirements, and that the student's attendance is properly documented as described above. School administration is responsible for enforcing the Massachusetts Public School Attendance Laws. Students not attending school during the day as mandated by law will be considered truant.

When Students have 3 days absent in a row and 5 or more days in which no work has been completed within a 6 month period AND are completing consistently fewer than 10 lessons per week or missing more than half of synchronous LiveLesson sessions offered in a given week, they will be referred to our multi-tiered truancy process to support re-engagement.

Students who are unable to re-engage with in-school support alone will be referred to our highest level of intervention for engagement. In this four-week level of engagement, the school will hold a

meeting with all relevant stakeholders to include school staff, any outside providers/organizations, the student, and caretakers. Following this meeting, there will be a two week monitoring period after which, if re-engagement does not take place, the student may be withdrawn from the program.

**Improving attendance requires a tiered approach that begins with prevention.**



1. Students identified as having special education needs can receive at any time tiered interventions in addition to the supports delineated in their individualized education program.



## Mandatory Testing

### Renaissance STAR 360 ELA & Mathematics Assessments

All TECCA students from kindergarten through 12th grade **are required to participate in the Star 360 ELA & Math assessments**. The Star 360 assessments will provide teachers with valuable data to promote student growth and learning. Upon completion of the assessments, teachers will personalize instruction to best support each individual student. The results of these assessments will be used to report student growth from the beginning of the year to the end of the year to the Department of Education, as a part of our School Accountability Plan.

Both the Star 360 ELA & Math assessments are mandatory and are administered three times throughout the school year.

Students in grades K-8 will complete the Star 360 with one of their grade level teachers or school counselors. The assessments will be completed in small groups in the LiveLesson room. Teachers will work to schedule testing sessions at the start of the school year. Students who complete the assessments within the two week testing window at the start of either semester will receive a 10/10 quiz grade in the gradebook. Students missing the assessments will receive a 0/10. For testing windows at the end of the semester, students in grades K-8 will have their lowest quiz grade dropped in both Math and ELA once testing is completed for both subjects.

### Writing Benchmark Assessment

Middle School students in grades 6-8 are also required to complete Writing Benchmark assessments three times per year. The purpose of these assessments is provide students the opportunity to engage in an on-demand writing task that will provide their teachers essential data about their ability to inform writing instruction. In addition, the benchmark simulates the MCAS by having students respond to an MCAS writing prompt which in turn helps students prepare for MCAS testing and other real-life scenarios requiring on-demand writing.

### MCAS Testing

Students attending TECCA **are required to participate** in the state testing, known as the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). **There is no “opt out” option for MCAS exams**. TECCA courses are aligned to the MA curriculum state standards, where instructional activities and assessments are thoughtfully crafted to help prepare students for the content they will encounter on the MCAS. These tests measure academic achievement of all public school students in the Commonwealth.

- Parents/Caretakers are expected to know the MCAS assessment dates in advance and will learn their MCAS testing sites at least three weeks prior to testing.
- In the event that MCAS is proctored virtually, TECCA students will be required to use their webcams during the testing sessions.
- Students in grades 3-8 take the ELA and Mathematics MCAS exams annually

- Students who are absent for any reason other than a medically documented condition will be considered to have an Unexcused Absence (U) for the day(s) they did not test.
- MCAS testing days are considered to be “required days of school.” All students must be physically present at their test site on their scheduled test day. Students not testing will be given school work to complete. Being absent from these “required days” is considered to be “skipping school.”
- All students are expected to stay in their assigned testing session a minimum of 90 minutes.
- More information about the administration of the tests, including specific dates and locations, will be regularly updated in the Virtual Library.

## **6-8 Placement**

### **Academic Courses with Enrichment in Grades 6-8**

#### **1. Language Arts**

A Language Arts with Enrichment course provides students with literature enrichment opportunities and projects in addition to what is provided in the standard Language Arts course. Students who enroll in this course may be required to attend an additional LiveLesson session of up to 30 minutes per week to engage in discussions and deliver presentations.

Students in Grades 6-8 who meet the following criteria are eligible to enroll in the Gifted/Talented Language Arts course and upon recommendation from their language arts teacher:

- Complete the STAR 360 benchmark test by September 15th of the school year
- Demonstrate grade level mastery on the ELA portion of the STAR 360 benchmark assessment
- Attend and participate in LiveLessons regularly
- Scored ‘Exceeding Expectations’ on MCAS the school year prior

#### **2. Science**

The Science with Enrichment course provides students with enrichment opportunities and multiple short term and long term project options, in addition to those provided in the standard science course. Students in grades 6-8 who are on track, attend and actively participate in LiveLesson are eligible to be enrolled in the Science with Enrichment course for the following year upon recommendation from their science teacher.

### **K - 8 Placement Changes during the School Year**

Placement changes may be requested by a family or by a teacher in consultation with the family and can only be made within the first four weeks of the semester or enrollment (add drop period). All placement change requests are subject to review and approval by the appropriate administrator.

Placement changes will be determined by the Middle School Principal. Placement changes may occur after the add drop period but will result in the removed course being recorded on the transcript as a withdrawal pass or withdrawal fail depending on the student's grade at the time of withdrawal.

### **6 – 8 Mid-year & End-of-Year Course Completion**

Students who complete their coursework prior to the end of the semester are expected to continue meeting attendance requirements. Students should work with their Learning Coaches and teachers to make sure they have mastered the curriculum of the given course. Students are expected to complete enrichment or extension activities provided by the teacher.

### **Transcripts**

Middle School students will be able to access ongoing information about their courses through their online grade books within Connexus and information about their Math course grade in Buzz Math. To request an official copy of a transcript, families must complete the Authorization for Release of High School Records and Letter of Recommendation form (located in the Virtual Library) and submit it to the school counselor for approval and processing. Official transcripts are generated at the school. These have official school signatures, raised seals, and are sent in a sealed envelope. Caretakers will be able to view a copy of the transcript through the Connexus.

### **High School Courses taken in Middle School**

Students are permitted to take approved High School math courses as prerequisites for higher level High School math courses during Middle School. High School courses taken in Middle School will not be credit bearing, and will not appear on the High School Transcript. Students will not be required to retake approved High School level courses that are taken in Middle School. All students will need to complete 4 credits of math during High School. Approved courses are at the discretion of the school principals.

### **Applications to Private or Vocational High Schools**

Students in grades 6-8 wishing to apply to private or vocational high schools should make an appointment to meet with their school counselor well in advance of application deadlines to discuss this. The school counselor will assist the student in completing any necessary forms and recommendations required to support the student's application. Applications to these schools including student recommendations are not considered part of the academic record and are not maintained by TECCA.

### **Attending Field Trips and other School-Sponsored Events**

Field trips and other school-sponsored events can be a valuable supplement to a student's

educational experience. Any student wishing to attend a field trip or other school-sponsored event must submit a properly completed and signed PERMISSION FORM as well as a CONSENT AND RELEASE FORM. All students attending school field trips and events must be accompanied by an adult over the age of 18 unless they have permission to drive themselves or otherwise indicated. All forms pertaining to field trips and other school-sanctioned events can be found in the Virtual Library or will be provided by the staff members hosting the field trip. It is imperative the school be kept up to date regarding students' allergies and/or other medical conditions when attending such events.

### **Middle School Honor Roll Criteria**

Students at TECCA who meet the following criteria will earn a spot on the Honor Roll. Honor Roll certificates are distributed twice a year: once after the first semester ends and once after the second semester ends.

**High Honors:** Students must have an overall average of 95%, and no courses with a grade lower than a 90%

**First Honors:** Students must have an overall average of 90%, and no courses with a grade lower than an 85%

**Second Honors:** Students must have an overall average of 85%, and no courses with a grade lower than an 80%



**TEC Connections Academy (TECCA)  
Commonwealth Virtual School**

## **TECCA High School**

Dear TECCA High School students, caretakers, and learning coaches,

It is with great excitement that I welcome you to the 2023-2024 school year! This section of the handbook includes valuable information about high school policies and regulations. Please thoroughly review this section to ensure that you understand this important information. High school is an extremely important time for adolescents -- a time for growth, maturity, and preparation for the responsibilities of adulthood. Working together, we will ensure many and varied learning experiences, positive social interactions, and a year of productive relationships among all members of our school community. Never hesitate to call or webmail with a question about anything outlined in this handbook. I look forward to working with each one of you in pursuit of a successful and rewarding school year.

Sincerely,

Robert J. Shaw, Ed.D.

High School Principal

## High School Staff

Title	Person and Number
<b>Administration</b>	
High School Principal	Dr. Robert Shaw, 774-335-5384
High School Assistant Principal	Mrs. Anne O'Connor, 774-335-5357
High School Assistant Principal	Mrs. Beth Hayes, 774-335-5376
<b>School Counselors</b>	
Mr. Antonio Latorella, 774-335-5326	
Ms. Rachel Natola, 774-335-5392	
Mrs. Carrie Connolly, 774-335-5262	
Ms. Julia Luz, 774-335-5413	
Ms. Elizabeth Lloyd, 774-335-5018	
<b>Credit Recovery Support</b>	
Mrs. Jennifer McDevitt, 774-335-5344	
<b>Social Workers</b>	
Mrs. Michelle Chew, 774-335-5259	
Ms. Stacey Cugini, 774-335-5407	
Ms. Meagan Graham, 774-335-5292	
Ms. Maria Rinaldi, 774-335-5417	
Ms. Jennifer Mis, 774-335-5426	
<b>Family Engagement Coordinator</b>	
Ms. Tara Schaffer, 774-335-5382	
<b>Graduation Coach</b>	
Ms. Sharon Monterio, 774-335-5429	

<b>Homeroom</b>	
Mr. Drew Collins, 774-335-5261	
Ms. Rachel Anglin, 774-335-5246	
Mrs. Melissa Fuller, 774-335-5284	
Ms. Stephanie Ho, 774-335-5304	
Ms. April Kaiser, 774-335-5315	
Mr. Michael Lindberg, 774-335-5331	
Ms. Meredith Mikaelian, 774-335-5348	
Ms. Kathryn Nahill, 774-335-5355	
Ms. Katelyn Skillings, 774-335-5431	
Ms. Ellen Dirgins, 774-335-5421	
Mr. Scott Sims 774-335-5342	
Mrs. Mary Sacramona, 774-335-5402	
<b>Special Education</b>	
Supervisor	Dr. Maureen Shaw, 774-335-5339
Teacher	Mr. Michael Anastasia, 774-335-5226
Teacher	Mrs. Kristen Bilbo, 774-335-5239
Teacher	Ms. Amanda Brooks-Clemeno, 774-335-5247
Teacher	Mr. David Casey, 774-335-5254
Teacher	Mrs. Darleen Castonguay, 774-335-5256
Psychologist	Mr. Michael Fitch, 774-335-5280
Teacher	Mrs. Maggie Madden, 774-335-5338
Teacher	Mr. Adam Melville, 774-335-5347
Teacher	Mrs. Gala McCurdy, 774-335-5343
Psychologist	Ms. Thi Rome, 774-335-5371



Teacher	Mrs. Jessica Sams, 774-335-5378
<b>English Language Arts</b>	
Lead Teacher	Mrs. Marion Howe, 774-335-5308
Teacher	Miss. Lexi Bedore, 774-335-5237
Teacher	Ms. Nichole Bliznak, 774-335-5240
Teacher	Mrs. Nicole Cafarelli, 774-335-5406
Teacher	Mr. Chris Duryea, 774-335-5274
Teacher	Mr. Matthew Fulone, 774-335-5285
Teacher	Mr. Scott Hurst, 774-335-5310
Teacher	Ms. Joanna Moest, 774-335-5349
Teacher	Ms. Daisy Wiggins, 774-335-5351
Reading Interventionist	Mrs. Lori Martin, 774-335-5415
<b>Mathematics</b>	
Lead Teacher	Mr. Ryan Hart, 774-335-5300
Teacher	Mrs. Jennifer Abbott, 774-335-5424
Teacher	Mrs. Nicole Eckhardt, 774-335-5275
Teacher	Mrs. Ryan Foster, 774-335-5282
Teacher	Mrs. Katelyn Green, 774-335-5293
Teacher	Mrs. Anita Her, 774-335-5302
Teacher	Ms. Bethany McMeekin, 774-335-5346
Teacher	Mr. Charles Rothman, 774-335-5375
Teacher	Mrs. Shannon Saumweber, 774-335-5381
Math Interventionist	Ms. Carolyn Campbell, 774-335-5250
<b>Science</b>	
Lead Teacher	Dr. Johanna Fitzgerald, 774-335-5281
Teacher	Mr. Joe Alfonse, 774-335-5225

Teacher	Ms. Phuong Ho, 774-335-5303
Teacher	Mrs. Laura Lambert, 774-335-5324
Teacher	Mrs. Diem Phan, 774-335-5365
Teacher	Mr. Patrick Rossi, 774-335-5374
Teacher	Ms. Manisha Sarin, 774-335-5380
<b>Social Studies</b>	
Lead Teacher	Mr. Britton Warner, 774-335-5395
Teacher	Mr. Aidan Ahearn, 774-335-5404
Teacher	Mr. Tim Courtois, 774-335-5266
Teacher	Mr. John Kendall, 774-335-5318
Teacher	Mr. James Klimas, 774-335-5322
Teacher	Mr. Kenneth Mullen, 774-335-5354
Teacher	Mrs. Kylie Murphy, 774-335-5399
Teacher	Ms. Jessica Sandoval, 774-335-5422
Teacher	Mrs. Megan Spender, 774-335-5387
<b>World Language/ Electives</b>	
Lead Teacher	Mr. Nicholas Atkinson, 774-335-5229
Art/Electives Teacher	Mr. James Barron, 774-335-5233
Spanish Teacher	Mr. Joe Burke, 774-335-5249
Electives Teacher	Mrs. Stephanie Gendron, 774-335-5287
Electives Teacher	Mrs. Sherie Harkins, 774-335-5299
PE/ Health Teacher	Mrs. Laura Hohengasser, 774-335-5305
Spanish Teacher	Ms. Jennifer Horrillo, 774-335-5307
ED Tech Teacher	Ms. Kaelen Larocque, 774-335-5325
Electives Teacher	TBD
Electives Teacher	Ms. Felicity Young, 774-335-5398

## Assignment of Grade Levels for Enrolling Students

Grade levels in grades 9-12 are determined solely by credits earned to date. The School Counseling Department reviews student transcripts and translates credits earned to TECCA's credit system. A full year course at TECCA is awarded 1 credit. A semester-long course is awarded .50 credits.

## Students Enrolling After the Start of the School Year

High school students entering mid-semester must submit report cards, progress reports and/or teacher notes from their previous school as part of the enrollment process. TECCA reviews the student's work and progress up to that point in the semester, and attempts to create as similar a schedule as possible.

All students who enroll after the first day of a new semester will be skipped ahead to present day and are not responsible for completing any school work that was assigned prior to enrollment. However, students are encouraged to review coursework covered prior to their enrollment to support their understanding and success. Students and Caretakers/Learning Coaches are expected to complete a Getting Started orientation course within 1 week of enrolling.

## Promotion

The following minimum credits are required to be promoted from one grade to the next:

Classification	Grade	Minimum # of Credits
Sophomore	10	4.5
Junior	11	10.5
Senior	12	17

At the time of a student's enrollment, school counselors will establish estimated grade levels based on preliminary information about previously earned credits. Student grade levels are then automatically updated twice each year - once in the fall and once again at the end of the school year - based on the student's earned and verified credits recorded in Pearson Online Classroom.

In some situations, the counselor, in consultation with the student, Learning Coach, and/or school administrator, may adjust the student's grade to match the student's current academic needs most appropriately.

## Graduation and Diploma Requirements

Students and families should know that every school's graduation requirements are different.

All students/families (especially seniors) should consult their School Counselor to ensure their transfer of credits and progression towards TECCA's graduation requirements.

To be eligible to graduate and receive a diploma from TECCA, a student must meet all of the following requirements:

1. Earn a total of 24 credits (in specific subjects as outlined in this Handbook). Credits earned at another Connections Academy school or schools may be included in this total, as these schools all use the same curriculum, technology, and instructional protocols as TECCA.
2. As required by state law, students must earn-minimum scores on the English, Mathematics, and Science/Technology MCAS tests.

### For the classes of 2024 and 2025

Meet or exceed the Meeting Expectations score of 472 on the English Language Arts and 486 on Mathematics grade 10 MCAS tests, and 220 on Legacy Chemistry, or meet the interim passing standard for the next generation Biology score of 467 or Introductory Physics score of 470 MCAS test.

### Or

Meet or exceed the Partially Meeting Expectations scaled score of 455 – 485 on the English Language Arts and 469 – 485 on the Mathematics Grade 10 MCAS tests, and fulfill the requirements of an Educational Proficiency Plan (EPP)\*. Meet the interim passing standard on the next generation Science/Technology MCAS test.

### For the classes of 2026 thru 2030

Meet or exceed the Meeting Expectations score of 486 on the English Language Arts and Mathematics grade 10 MCAS tests, and meet or exceed the score of 470 passing standard on one of the next generation Science/Technology MCAS tests.

### Or

Meet or exceed the Partially Meeting Expectations scaled score of 470 on the English Language Arts and the Mathematics Grade 10 MCAS tests, and fulfill the requirements of an Educational Proficiency Plan (EPP)\*. Meet the interim passing standard on the next generation Science/Technology MCAS test.

3. Meet any other additional graduation requirements required by the school or state.

\* The Educational Proficiency Plan (EPP) is required for any student who scores *partially meeting*

*expectations* in either ELA or Mathematics. In these cases, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has mandated that students continue their academic study in the deficient core content area. Therefore, in an effort to meet the Competency Determination (CD), students may use their core courses in junior ENGLISH and MATH. Students are noted as having earned a Competency Determination (CD) when they pass their content subject area course and pass that course's standards-based final examination. Failure to do this in the junior year will require the student to achieve this standard at the close of senior year. It is important to note that a high school diploma cannot be granted to any student who does not fulfill the Competency Determination in all required MCAS subjects. Please note that students taking an Algebra 2 course will attain a CD when they have passed the course.

### **High School Graduation**

When students meet all of TECCA's graduation requirements, they are eligible to participate in the graduation ceremony. Once the student has graduated, the student will no longer be enrolled in TEC Connections Academy and will not have access to Pearson Online Classroom. Unofficial transcripts will be available to students via Pearson Online Classroom as long as the student is enrolled in TEC Connections Academy, and official transcripts will be available at any time by contacting the school. Early graduates will receive a school-issued diploma in June when spring graduates receive their diplomas. TECCA will hold June diplomas until the first day of the following school year and summer diplomas until the end of the first semester of the following school year. After these dates TECCA is no longer responsible for ongoing storage of student diplomas and can provide official transcripts as proof of graduation. TECCA does not mail diplomas outside of Massachusetts. Any student requesting that their diploma be mailed must complete a waiver form indicating their understanding that diplomas may be lost in the mail and TECCA does not order a replacement diploma.

### **Subject Requirements**

Students in the class of 2024 must earn the following credits in the following subjects in order to graduate:

Content Area	Credits Required	Required Courses
Language Arts	4	English 9, 10, 11*, 12* (* AP ELA courses can be substituted for these courses.)
Math	4	Algebra 1, Geometry, Algebra 2, Math Elective
Science	3	Biology plus two (2) Science electives
Social Studies	4	US History II, World History, American Government, Social Studies Elective
Physical Education	1	Personal Fitness, Physical Education
Health	1	Health Fitness and Nutrition A/B

Fine Art	1	Any two: Digital Photo, HS Digital Arts, Living Music I/II, Foundations of Art, Art and World Cultures, Acting, Intro to Theatre
Foreign Language	2	Choose only 1: Spanish, French, German, Sign Language, Japanese
Career/College Prep	2	Freshman Success (9th grade) Career Exploration/Career Tech Course  (10th grade) College Prep w SAT or Internship/Work-study (11th) Senior Success (12th)
Electives	2	Courses of student's choosing

Beginning with the class of 2025, students must earn the following credits in the following areas and subjects in order to graduate:

Content Area	Credits Required	Required Courses
Language Arts	4	English 9, 10, 11*, 12* (* AP ELA courses can be substituted for these courses.)
Math	4	Algebra 1, Geometry, Algebra 2, Math Elective
Science	3	Biology plus two (2) Science electives
Social Studies	4	US History I, World History, US History II, Social Studies Elective
Physical Education	1	Personal Fitness, Physical Education
Health	1	Health Fitness and Nutrition A/B
Fine Art	1	Any two: Digital Photo, HS Digital Arts, Living Music I/II, Foundations of Art, Art and World Cultures, Acting, Intro to Theatre
Foreign Language	2	Choose only 1: Spanish, French, German, Sign Language, Japanese
Career/College Prep	2	Freshman Success (9th grade) Career Exploration/Career Tech Course  (10th grade) College Prep w SAT or Internship/Work-study/Career Tech Course (11th) Senior Success (12th)
Electives	2	Courses of student's choosing

Per Massachusetts state law, all high school students are required to enroll in a Physical Education course each year.

## **Course Levels**

**Foundations:** These courses are not applicable to any student who wants to apply to college or NCAA eligibility after graduation. Students should speak with their school counselor before taking a Foundations course. These courses move at a slightly slower pace than standard level courses.

**Standard:** These are standard college prep courses. There is no prerequisite grade to take these courses.

**Honors:** These courses cover the same content as standard courses but move slightly faster in pace and require additional writing assignments. Students should have a grade of B or higher to be eligible to take these courses.

**Advanced Placement:** Very rigorous and challenging courses designed for students who feel academically confident in a specific content area. Advanced Placement courses cover a large breadth of material and require a substantial amount of writing and assessments. Students should have a grade of a B+ or higher to be eligible to take these courses. Some colleges will award students college credit for AP courses taken in high school. These credits are awarded based on the student's score on the AP exam and credits awarded vary by college/university. In order to receive AP weighted credit on the transcript students must sit for the AP exam.

\*In addition to the above required credits, students are encouraged to complete as many of the following as possible:

- Advanced Placement (AP)
- Dual Enrollment courses taken for both high school and college credit
- Work-based learning
- Internships

TECCA uses a standard whereby one credit equals approximately 180 hours of instruction (sometimes referred to as Carnegie Units). Students are required to be enrolled in a minimum of four courses per semester in order to be considered full-time students, with the exception of graduating seniors or students with an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) that designates a reduced course load.

## **Grades and Grade Point Average**

Students are awarded credit only for courses in which they have earned a grade of D- (60%) or higher. This applies both to courses taken at TECCA and at other schools. Courses required for graduation must be retaken by the student if a passing score of 60% or higher is not earned, and re-taking such courses may delay the student's graduation. The school's grading scale is below.

Semester and year-end GPA calculations will follow a four-point scale (below). Grade point averages will only include graded courses; pass/fail courses will not be averaged into a student's GPA. Grades for Honors courses are weighted with one-half (0.5) extra grade point. Grades for

Advanced Placement (AP) courses are weighted with one (1) extra grade point.

Grade	Grade %	Passing?	Non- Weighted	Weighted (Honors)	Weighted (AP)
A+	97 - 100	Yes	4.00	4.50	5.00
A	93-96	Yes	4.00	4.50	5.00
A-	90-92	Yes	3.67	4.17	4.67
B+	87-89	Yes	3.33	3.83	4.33
B	83-86	Yes	3.00	3.5	4.00
B-	80-82	Yes	2.67	3.17	3.67
C+	77-79	Yes	2.33	2.83	3.33
C	73-76	Yes	2.00	2.50	3.00
C-	70-72	Yes	1.67	2.17	2.67
D+	67-69	Yes	1.33	1.83	2.33
D	63-66	Yes	1.00	1.50	2.00
D-	60-62	Yes	0.67	1.17	1.67
F	0-59	No	0.00	0.00	0.00

### **Grade Point Average**

Two cumulative grade point averages (GPA) are calculated to the hundredth of a point. A weighted, and an unweighted grade point average, are calculated according to the table described above. The weighted GPA is what is reported to outside educational institutions, and what appears on a student's transcript. Both GPA's are available for viewing in the student's Data view.

### **Class Rank**

TECCA does not calculate a class rank.

### **Release of High School Educational Records**

TECCA will provide educational records, including official high school transcripts, test scores, and letters of recommendation to third parties, such as post-secondary institutions, scholarship



committees, and/or potential employers, only with prior written approval from the student's Caretaker or from the student if he or she is aged 18 or older or an emancipated minor.

In order to ensure that application deadlines are successfully met, we require advance notice of at least 10 working days for requests to provide educational records to students, Caretakers, and/or third parties. We require a 30 day notice for letters of recommendation.

Requests for records should be made using the Authorization for Release of High School Records and Letter of Recommendation form available in the Virtual Library under Forms, Colleges and Careers.

### **Transcripts**

Students will be able to access ongoing information about their courses through their online grade books within Connexus. To request an official copy of a transcript, families must complete the Authorization for Release of High School Records and Letter of Recommendation form (located in the Virtual Library) and submit it to the school counselor for approval and processing. Official transcripts are generated at the school. These have official school signatures, raised seals, and are sent in a sealed envelope. Caretakers will be able to view a copy of the transcript through the Connexus.

### **Credit from Other Schools**

As part of the enrollment process, families submit their students' most recent report cards and/or transcripts. Counselors analyze previously earned credits and determine how credits will transfer to TECCA. The school counselor may require complete unofficial transcripts or complete end-of-year report cards before approving a student's grade level and course selection. Official transcripts are required within the first 30 days of school for final credit transfer approval and for final course approval. Upon graduation or withdrawal, the official TECCA transcript will display both the credits earned at TECCA, as well as any transfer credits.

### **Credit for coursework completed in a non-standard school program**

Students may request to receive credit for courses completed in previous educational settings other than fully accredited schools, including home school, non-accredited public, private, alternative, or international schools.

There are two options for requesting and being granted credit by TECCA for coursework completed in a non-standard school program:

1. Assessment: the student takes and achieves a passing grade (D-) on the Connections Academy exam(s) associated with the course. This may be the midterm and final exam or other proficiency exam as determined by the content area teacher. Alternatively, the student may take a state-approved standardized test. If the student achieves a score of "Proficient"

or higher he or she will be granted credit for that course. The test(s) must be taken in a school- approved proctored setting.

2. Portfolio and Competency: The student submits a portfolio documenting coursework, which may include:

- Samples of prior work
- List of texts used in prior courses
- Artwork
- Writing samples
- Report card from prior school
- Student interview
- Other materials as requested by the school counselor

The portfolio will be reviewed by each content area teacher. The content area teachers will make final decisions about credit(s) to be granted for the student's prior coursework. The student must also document the number of hours per week, and overall hours that were spent on this course.

For example, a student who shows sufficient evidence of having successfully completed Algebra I, Geometry, English 9 and 10, Earth Science, Biology, U.S. History, Government, and French I and II, will be granted credit by each content area teacher for each of the courses documented, and will be placed in Connections Academy at the grade level appropriate for the number of credits granted.

The school counselor and/or principal may review the student's portfolio along with the content area teachers, but the content area teachers will be responsible for determining if the student is indeed proficient, and may require a competency test based on Massachusetts State Standards in the specific subject to determine whether or not credit is to be granted.

Students may use a combination of the above-listed methods for requesting credit. For example, a student may choose option #1 for mathematics and science courses, and #2 for humanities courses and foreign language. Credits for courses completed in a non-standard school program are granted as described above, but no grades are assigned. Students receiving credit will be given a grade of "Pass," which is not included in the calculation of the student's GPA. These credits are not entered into the student's records until the student has completed a full semester in Connections Academy. The transcript will reflect these credits as "pass" or "fail."

### **Credit for College Courses: Dual Enrollment**

Families must consult with the school counselor for permission to earn high school credit for college courses taken while the student is still enrolled in TECCA. Students wishing to earn high school credit for college courses must have written approval of the school counselor in advance of enrolling in the college course. Students may take up to two core academic courses per semester in a dual enrollment setting.

Dual enrollment college courses will equate to 0.5 - 1 credit at TECCA based on the credits awarded by the college and duration of the course. In order to receive high school credit for a college course,

the student must pass the course with a grade of D- or higher. College credits and letter grades from dual enrollment courses will appear on the TEC Connections Academy transcript.

### **Work and Independent Study**

Students at the high school level may opt to pursue high school credit through work study, internship, or independent study. All work studies, internships, and independent studies must be approved by the student's school counselor and school administration prior to participating in the work, internship or independent study. Students must complete the work/Independent study application in order to be considered. A full credit work/independent study must have 180 hours of participation. A half credit work or independent study must have 90 hours of participation. Students pursuing a work or independent study must have an unbiased supervisor monitoring them. Examples of acceptable supervisors would be a TECCA teacher, a tutor or outside teacher, boss, or direct supervisor.

### **Credit for Other Experiences**

Many students are involved in activities outside their school experiences, such as: music, dance, and art lessons, foreign language instruction, and participation on athletic teams. While TECCA recognizes the value of these activities, they cannot be used to earn high school credit unless granted approval by school administration prior to engaging in the activity.

### **Prerequisites and Sequencing**

Students must meet all prerequisite requirements prior to registering in courses. Prerequisites are listed in each course overview in the course catalog. The course recommendation process (described in December/January) articulates the course/teacher recommendation and override process.

### **National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Eligibility**

In order to be eligible for National College Athletic Association (NCAA) scholarships, students must meet certain academic and other requirements, including but not limited to taking NCAA-approved high school courses. Many of TECCA's core and elective courses are NCAA-approved; however, students interested in NCAA scholarships should contact their school counselor to determine an appropriate course schedule that will help them meet NCAA requirements. Students should also visit the NCAA Eligibility Center for more information. Students pursuing NCAA Eligibility may not be individually "skipped ahead" in any course.

### **National Honor Society**

In order to be eligible to apply for TECCA's National Honor Society students must meet the following requirements:

- Enrolled in grade 10 or above

- In good academic standing
- Have attended TECCA for at least one semester
- Have a cumulative GPA of (3.3 or higher)
- Have no documentation of disciplinary action related to character, scholarship or leadership.

\*Any NHS eligible student meeting the requirements above will be notified via webmail of their eligibility and may choose to apply at that time. The application period is 2 weeks, and there are no extensions. Students interested in the NHS should contact the NHS Faculty Advisor. Membership in the NHS is an honor bestowed upon a student, not a right.

### **High School Course Add/Drop**

The Add/Drop deadline for any course is the end of the second week of LiveLessons. Students are limited to three changes during any given school year.

Students may remove courses after the Add/Drop period is complete with permission from their school counselor. Courses removed from a student's schedule after the add drop date will have either a Withdrawal Pass or Withdrawal Fail on their transcript.

### **Credit Recovery**

Some courses are available in Credit Recovery format. Students must earn a grade of 40 or higher in the course to be eligible to take the course in Credit Recovery format. With a grade less than 40, students must retake the course.

### **Eligibility to Participate in Athletics**

Students in grades 9 to 12 are eligible to participate in TECCA athletic programs, provided they meet the minimum requirements outlined below.

- A student shall be eligible for interscholastic competition for no more than four consecutive years after initially entering Grade 9. This limitation shall apply without regard to actual participation or attempt to participate.
- A student cannot at any time participate unless that student is taking four academic courses at TECCA.
- A student shall be under 19 years of age, but may compete during the remainder of the school year, provided that student's 19th birthday occurs on or after September 1 of that year. For Freshman competition only, a student shall be under 16 years of age but may compete during the remainder of the school year provided that the sixteenth birthday occurs on or after September 1 of that year.
- FALL - To be eligible for the fall season, the student is required to have passed and received full credits for the previous academic year in at least four academic courses.

- WINTER & SPRING - A student must secure during the last marking period preceding the contest a passing grade and full credit in at least four academic courses.
- A student cannot count, for eligibility, any subject taken during the summer, unless that subject was pursued and failed during the immediate preceding academic year.
- The student must pass a physical examination prior to participation in High School Athletics. A physical exam covers the student for 13 months from the exam date. A student's eligibility will terminate once a physical has reached the 13 month limit.
- From the earliest fall practice date, to the conclusion of the academic year or final athletic event (whichever is latest), a student shall not, regardless of the quantity, use, consume, possess, buy/sell, or give away any beverage containing alcohol; any tobacco product (including e-cigarettes, vape pens and all similar devices); marijuana (including synthetic); steroids; drug paraphernalia; or any controlled substance. This policy includes products such as "NA or near beer," inhalants (defined as any substance that produces a mind-altering effect when inhaled), and misuse of over-the-counter I MIAA Handbook July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2023 59 medications and substances used for the purposes of altering one's mental state. It is not a violation for a student to be in possession of a legally defined drug specifically prescribed for the student's own use by their doctor.
- A student who transfers from any school to an MIAA member high school is ineligible to participate in any interscholastic athletic contest at any level for a period of one year in all sports in which that student participated at the varsity level or its equivalent during the one year period immediately preceding the transfer. Before a transfer student can be certified as eligible in a specific sport within the year of the transfer, the sending MIAA school principal and athletic director must certify on Form 200 by signature what the student participated in - sport & level (sub varsity, varsity or non-school team) during the year prior to the actual transfer.

### **Homeroom Check-in Calls**

All students at TECCA are required to speak with their homeroom teachers at least once every two weeks. Homeroom teachers will set up a mutually agreed upon time to conduct this call at the start of the school year or upon enrollment. Whenever possible, the biweekly check-in will be conducted in the LiveLesson room to allow for face to face interaction. If a student cannot make their

scheduled check in call they are responsible for notifying their homeroom teacher and attending a rescheduled check-in call. Missed check-in calls are akin to skipping class (i.e., truancy) and missing them repeatedly may lead to withdrawal.

## **Live Face-to-Face Check-Ins**

For the safety of all students and as required by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, students are required to attend virtual face-to-face check-ins, which may occur during LiveLessons for classes and the biweekly homeroom call. High school students also may meet this requirement by attending a daily face-to-face check-in block hosted by the administrative team. This time also will be used for high school announcements. The student will meet the face-to-face requirement by attending with their camera turned on.

## **High School Curriculum Based Assessments (CBAs)**

TECCA recognizes that students can (and should) demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways. As part of each 9-12 core academic course semester grade, students are required to demonstrate their learning in real-time communications between the student and the teacher used to gather formative information on students' understanding of concepts. These communications may be conducted on the phone or in the teacher's LiveLesson room and will focus on the course content. The CBA counts as an assessment grade. If a student does not participate in the CBA they will receive a zero on the assessment. However, students will receive a 100% for engaging in content-based discussion in their CBA. Additional work may be assigned if the student needs additional practice in a content area or skill to meet proficiency.

## **LiveLesson Attendance Expectations**

Most high school courses have a LiveLesson component. Students are expected to attend LiveLessons either live or by watching recordings of them. Teachers may use LiveLesson attendance and participation in the computation of the overall grade in the corresponding course. LiveLesson attendance is logged by the teacher.

## **Work Submission Deadlines**

All students are expected to stay current with lessons and assessments as populated on their planner. The deadline date for the work in each unit in a course is four weeks after the unit ends. The work for each unit includes the lessons, tests, portfolios, and the LiveLesson secret words. After the deadline date, any uncompleted work from that unit will be given a zero and marked as complete so that the student may move on to the next unit. Be sure to reach out to your content teachers for any questions about assessments and assignments.

## **Temporary Location Change**

A "Temporary Location Change" request must be submitted if the student is expected to travel or relocate away from the student's primary Massachusetts residence for more than two (2) weeks. For

this type of location change, the Caretaker must contact their homeroom teacher to initiate the Location Transfer Request Form process which will be completed via DocuSign. Once this form is completed by the Caretaker via DocuSign, it will be submitted automatically to the Principal or Principal's designee for approval. These forms must be completed and submitted a month prior to the relocation. In emergency situations pertaining to relocation, please contact the Principal or Assistant Principal immediately. No location transfer requests will be granted beyond one semester's length and students must be present in Massachusetts for MCAS testing with no exception.

In addition, traveling students agree to abide by all contacts and attendance requirements expected of students at TECCA, as outlined in this student handbook. This includes attendance at daily face to face check ins, homeroom check in appointments, any required LiveLessons, timely lesson completion, and a total of 28 hours of weekly attendance to be entered by the Caretaker/Learning Coach. Caretakers/Learning Coaches must be available and reachable by phone to address any concerns regarding the above requirements. Students who go into our engagement process while they have an active Location Transfer Request will be considered to be in breach of contract and need to return to Massachusetts or otherwise be withdrawn.

Please Note: TECCA reserves the right to further verify that the family's residence remains in Massachusetts. Please reference the "Residency" section of this Handbook for more information.

### **Behavior at School Sponsored Events**

The use of drugs, alcohol, or tobacco, including VAP pens or similar devices, is prohibited.

Behavior and attendance at all school-sponsored events will be determined by the administration, advisors, and chaperons.

Students will be asked to leave any school-sponsored event when their behavior is unacceptable. School disciplinary action will follow.

Failure to obey the instructions of school officials and/or to comply with school rules during on-campus or off-campus events, may result in the loss of eligibility to attend other school sponsored events.