MassCA

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Virtual School

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENT HANDBOOK

2026-2027

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A Note from the Principal

Hello 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 2026-2027 school year. 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 events, and community building events, just to name a few, are all aspects of the MassCA Elementary School 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 MassCA 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

General District Information

School Information	School Contact
Elementary School Principal	Melanie Joubanian, 774-335-5314
Elementary School Assistant Principal	Nicole Buckley, 774-335-5248
Elementary School Administrative Assistant	Deb MacFarland 508-441-6851
Main District Phone Number	774-315-5123
School Fax Number	774-256-9343
School Address	300 Foxborough Blvd Foxborough, MA 02035
School Hours	8:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Technical/General Connexus Support	800-382-6010
Webmail	All staff and support services are located in the Education Management System's (Connexus®) WebMail address book.

Contact Information for District and School Staff
Individualized contact information for specific staff can be found in the District & School Directories located in the virtual library.

Communication: School-Related Problems and Concerns
From time to time, parents may wish to bring problems or concerns to the attention of appropriate school officials. To assist parents in this regard, the following general guidelines may be helpful:

1. Any concern regarding a school-related matter should first be raised by the parent with the staff member most directly involved. For instance, questions regarding the content of instructional materials or homework assignments should be raised with the teacher involved.
2. If the matter remains unresolved, the parent may wish to speak with the building administration. Appointments can be scheduled by contacting the office of the principal involved.
3. If the matter is still unresolved, the parent may wish to speak to the Superintendent. For an appointment, contact the Superintendent's Office.
4. If the matter still remains unsolved, the parent may wish to bring it to the attention of the School Committee by communicating directly with the Chairperson of the School Committee.

We urge that parents use the progressive steps outlined above as most problems can be addressed satisfactorily by the teacher or other staff member most directly involved. Starting out

at the top inevitably results in no decision and the matter being remanded to the staff member most directly involved. The following are examples (not an all-inclusive list) of issues which are more appropriately addressed at the levels indicated.

1. Teachers

a. Student homework assignments, quizzes, and tests;
b. Course content, instructional materials, academic progress, and extra help;
c. Issues related to classroom discipline, relationships with other pupils and the teacher.

2. School Counselors

a. Problems between school and home; pupil and other pupils;
b. Personal matters relating to student development, behaviors, and interactions with others.

3. Principals/Assistant Principals

a. Any issue arising out of a school building when no other staff member can be specifically identified;
b. Student placement issues (in a class, program, instructional level);
c. Instructional and co-curricular program issues (athletics, music, drama, etc.);
e. Complaints, dissatisfaction, or concerns regarding school personnel;
f. Student records; school-wide discipline issues.

4. Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent

a. Questions regarding School Committee policies and administrative procedures;
b. School Committee meeting and agenda items;
c. Any school system records or documents;
d. Budgetary matters;
e. Hiring and supervision of staff;
f. Complaints, dissatisfaction, or concerns regarding school personnel or services which have not been resolved at the Principal's level;
g. Suggestions or requests for change in the curriculum;
h. Transportation matters (if not resolved by transportation coordinator/business manager).

5. School Committee

a. Matters pertaining to policy (class size; student trips; fund-raising activities, etc.);
b. Requests specific courses and programs are included in the program of studies;
c. Complaints regarding the Superintendent;
d. School Committee minutes and agenda items (Chairperson of School Committee);
e. Budgetary matters; long-range planning (facilities, programs, etc.).

District Overview

MassCA 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 MassCA programs and activities, or in its employment practices.

MassCA's Core Values

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

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

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

MassCA's Portrait of a Graduate

In 2022, the MassCA 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 MassCA 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.

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

Critical Thinking - MassCA 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 - MassCA 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 - MassCA 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 - MassCA 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 - MassCA 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 - MassCA 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.

Portrait of a Graduate Initiative

To support the District's Portrait of a Graduate Initiative, teachers will explore each of the six essential traits and skills in their classrooms throughout the school year. Each month, an Elementary School assembly will feature one of the traits or skills, giving students the opportunity to come together as a community and show what the trait or skill means to them. These assemblies will take the place of regularly scheduled Live Lessons and it is expected that students attend. Students who exemplify and model the featured trait or skill of the month will receive a certificate of recognition.

Master Calendar

The MassCA master calendar can be found in the Virtual Library within Connexus and on the Massachusetts Connections Academy (MassCA) website.

Enrollment

It is important for enrolling students and families to balance the reasons for enrolling in MassCA 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, MassCA will work closely with families to help them be successful in the online environment. If you have any questions regarding enrollment, please contact our Registrar, at 774-335-5241

Proof of Residency

To be eligible to enroll in MassCA, 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 MassCA. MassCA 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, MassCA 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 MassCA office to present information verifying residency; in the absence thereof, the student may be withdrawn from Massachusetts Connections Academy (MassCA).

Compliance with Local, State, and Federal Mandates

MassCA 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 MassCA'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.

MassCA 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 their 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 MassCA 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, MassCA 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. MassCA will not bar or discourage a student from attending school because the student lacks a birth certificate.

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 MassCA, will be required to submit a disciplinary history to MassCA during the enrollment process. If a student has been expelled from another school they are required to submit a disciplinary history to MassCA during the enrollment process which will be reviewed by the school principal who will make a final decision regarding enrollment & placement. Students who have a pending legal matter must indicate so.

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 must complete several tasks after enrollment but before classes begin including but not limited to, attending a welcome session, completing an asynchronous orientation, submitting all required documentation and school records, participating in meetings with school & district administration if applicable. Failure to complete these tasks may jeopardize enrollment.

Dual Enrollment in another K-12 Public School

A student is not allowed to enroll in MassCA 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 MassCA. Failure to do so may result in immediate withdrawal. This statement is acknowledged by parents/legal guardians prior to final confirmation. Local districts will be notified by MassCA when a student enrolls. This does not waive the Caretaker's obligation to inform the district. MassCA may also inform districts of a student's application status.

Applications to Private Schools

Students in the Elementary School in the application process for private 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 MassCA.

Kindergarten Enrollment

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

Assignment of Grade Levels for Enrolling Students

Student report cards are reviewed and grade levels are determined by the last grade level successfully completed or as assigned by the previous elementary school. For example, if the student was retained at their former school they will be retained at MassCA as well.

K-5 Placement

Academic Courses with Enrichment in Grades 3-5

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 3-5 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

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 3-5 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 – 5 Placement Changes during the School Year

Placement changes may be requested by a family or by a teacher in consultation with the family. All placement change requests are subject to review and approval by the appropriate administrator.

Placement changes will be determined by the Elementary 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.

Physical Education

In accordance with MA General Law - Part I, Title XII, Chapter 71, Section 3, all MassCA 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 theirself 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.

District Attendance Policy

Revised July 2025

School attendance is discussed regularly during homeroom check-ins with the student and family. Students and families are reminded of the expectation to submit work to align with attendance hours during these check-ins. Reporting absences is the responsibility of the caretaker, or the learning coach on behalf of the caretaker, if the two individuals are not the same person, and should be completed on the day the absence occurs. Daily attendance is calculated using a formula which includes being seen on camera, lesson completion, and last login and is entered into Connexus on the first school day of each week by the attendance clerk. 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 may be conducted to help the student/family access needed resources and plan to engage in school. If after several interventions have proven unsuccessful to re-engage the student, staff may file with DCF and/or CRAs with the court system as needed.

Required Instructional/Attendance Hours

Grade (s)	Weekly Required Hours	Annual Required Hours
K – 5	25	900
6 – 12	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 records are stored digitally within the learning management system and attendance is monitored and updated weekly by the attendance clerk. The attendance clerk is responsible for downloading and reviewing a daily report that tracks individual student data in accordance with the following daily student attendance expectations. MassCA collects daily attendance records which are reported to DESE on a regular basis.
To be considered present each day a student must:

1. Attend at least one daily homeroom face-to-face session.
2. Complete scheduled asynchronous lessons.
3. Login to Connexus.

This data is compiled into a daily report to assess whether students have met the attendance requirements for each day of the previous week. The attendance clerk then uses the report to enter attendance for each student into Connexus on Monday of the following week. (In instances where Monday is a holiday, attendance for the prior week is entered into Connexus on the next school day.)

By the following Monday, to receive full attendance for the prior week, students must:

1. Meet daily face-to-face requirements.

2. Have completed at least 90% of expected asynchronous lessons.

3. Have fewer than 10 overdue lessons.

Failure to meet these criteria will result in a determination of an absence for one or more days in the prior week and will be unexcused absences if medical documentation is not provided.

Failure to meet the above outlined daily attendance requirements will result in the daily absence call being sent for all missed school days.

The attendance clerk monitors daily attendance. The attendance codes will be implemented in the following manner and entered each Monday into Connexus for the week prior:

Code	Definition
0-9	Hours of Schooling
Vacation	Vacation (See Below)

E	Excused
U	Unexcused

Absences

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

Key Attendance Definitions:

Attendance is defined as participating in MassCA school-related activities including the live face-to-face check-in, synchronous instruction, and completing assignments. A student must be at school, at a school-related activity, or receiving academic instruction for at least half of the school day to be counted as present.

Chronically Absent: Students who miss at least 10% of days enrolled (e.g., 18 days absent when enrolled for 180 school days) are considered chronically absent.

Habitually Truant: A school-aged child who is not excused from attendance and who" willfully fails to attend school for 8 or more school days in a quarter is considered habitually truant.

Excused Absence: Any absence confirmed by medical documentation, or an absence reported by a parent (maximum of three days will be excused per school year without medical documentation and/or approval from a school administrator). For all non-medically excused absences, students are required to make up for all missed work.

Unexcused Absence: Any absence not reported by the parent, absences that are not excused with medical documentation (except for the first 3 days per school year as defined above). Failure to attend MCAS without medical documentation.

Vacation Day: Vacation days are established by the school calendar. These days include designated federal holidays and all school breaks. Vacation days cannot be used on otherwise required school days.

When students attend school at least 5 days per week but have a combined total hour of less than 25 hours (Elementary School) or 28 hours (Middle & High Schools), the attendance clerk will adjust attendance by combining daily hours and marking absences accordingly.

Students who are absent due to medical reasons will be marked excused by the attendance clerk only after the parent reports the absence via the Absence Reporting Form, 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. This webmail does not take the place of calling the attendance line to report the absence to MassCA's Attendance Clerk.

Attendance/Contact Intervention System

The following scenarios detail when families receive notifications from the Attendance Clerk via email, phone, and text using our district communication system:

- The caretakers of students who have blank attendance or an unexcused absence will receive a call & text within three business days.
- The caretakers of students who are missing attendance hours from the week prior will receive a communication on Monday reminding them of the attendance expectations.
- The students who do not attend face-to-face check-in for the day prior will receive a call and text within two days.
- Caretakers of students who do not log in for greater than two school days, do not have attendance logged, and do not have a vacation day or excused absence will receive a call and a text.

If a student is absent for more than 3 days without logging in or does not have face-to-face contact with a MassCA 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. After the third attempt with no contact, the Attendance Clerk will send written notification that contact has not been made.
3. If contact is not made within 1 school day of the notification from the attendance clerk, 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 or designee will request a welfare check via the local police department.

The attendance intervention system is implemented and tracked by the Family Engagement Specialists Coordinators (FES) and the Attendance Clerk.

- 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 from the FES 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 FES 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 FES, 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.

Attendance Responsibilities by Role

Caretaker Responsibilities

The caretaker (defined as a parent, legal guardian, and/or learning coach) must ensure that the child in their care attends school and is responsible for ensuring that students meet the attendance expectations as set for above and should complete the following action steps daily:

- Refer to the Required Instructional Hours section of this handbook for important information on the minimum weekly recommended hours, and ensure students spend the required time on schooling activities

Caretakers are expected to report all absences through the Absence Reporting Form. If a caretaker has an issue with reporting an absence through the Absence Reporting they should call the MassCA attendance line, 774-335-5001. If the student does not plan to attend school on a regularly scheduled school day the caretaker will need to request an excused absence. Requests for excused absences beyond three in a row will require approval from the school principal. Requests for this can be submitted via the Absence Reporting Form.

If a parent is requesting an excused absence for a medical reason, the parent or caretaker must submit a webmail to the attendance clerk within three days of the absence. Upon receipt of the webmails including medical documentation when needed, the homeroom teacher or designee will adjust the student's attendance record.

- A doctor's note is required for all absences beyond 3 in a row or 5 in one semester.

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

Student Responsibilities

- Attend Morning Meeting or afternoon Closing Circle daily for face-to-face check-ins
- Complete assigned lessons daily
- Attending LiveLessons daily, or watching the recording in the case of an absence
- Participate in all scheduled meetings with MassCA staff (teachers, counselors, etc.)

Homeroom Teacher Responsibilities

- The homeroom teacher is responsible for monitoring & logging daily face-to-face check-in attendance and all other student interactions
- Refer students to the next layer of support when necessary (escalation, missed face-to-face check-ins, continued difficulty with meeting the attendance expectations, etc.)

Family Engagement Specialist (FES) Responsibilities

In conjunction with the Homeroom teacher, the Family Engagement Specialists regularly review all attendance records and support students with the truancy/engagement process (per the procedures set forth within the escalation system outlined above). The role of the FES is to be an additional support person for MassCA students who demonstrate difficulty with meeting attendance and participation requirements.

Each school (elementary, middle, and high school) has an FES who supports students who are identified as at risk of truancy or truant by following the re-engagement process. Re-engagement at MassCA 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
- Regular and mandatory meetings between the family and the engagement team
- Additional scheduled meetings with teachers
- Academic Growth Plans, etc.
- Social Work Referrals
- Home Visits as appropriate
- Hand Hold Massachusetts
- Family Resource Centers
- FESs track students from the beginning of the truancy process through to either successful re-engagement or withdrawal.

FESs schedule and lead all truancy/engagement meetings with students, caretakers, and other potential team members.

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 FESCs, homeroom teachers, school 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 in Connexus daily.
- Communicate with families who do not meet attendance expectations.
- Monitor Attendance Issues – The school's Attendance Clerk monitors student attendance. They contact families of students with low attendance rates and share this information with school & district administrators, 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 by Caretakers. 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 that are unable to attend the sessions offered by their teacher.

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.) and after MassCA investigates the extended absence will be withdrawn and reported to their local district and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as a

dropout (6-12) or status unknown (K-5) in the best interest of their safety and learning.

As appropriate, homeroom teachers, administrators, etc. will contact families to discuss attendance patterns and concerns.

Reporting for Special Education & 504 Students

Outreach for Special Education & 504 students will be the same as above. In addition, the Special Education Team or 504 Team will notify the Caretaker that the student is in violation of meeting the attendance and participation requirements and discuss possible strategies, support, etc. The Caretaker will also be notified that if the student continues to violate these requirements, the applicable Team may be reconvened to review current services/supports/goals/accommodations and placement and that a representative from the student's home district may 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 or 504 Team will be reconvened to discuss that the student 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 IEP or 504 Plan and/or placement as per the Team's recommendation.

LiveLesson Attendance Expectations

All students at MassCA are expected to attend LiveLessons for their academic courses live unless otherwise discussed with the School Principal. Recordings are available when students are unable to attend live; however, recordings should not be relied on regularly because they do not provide the same level of engagement, interaction, or support as live instruction.

Students who watch recorded LiveLessons are responsible for submitting all graded assignments from the LiveLesson within the time frame provided. Students who attend LiveLessons experience a much higher degree of success at MassCA, and caretakers are expected to support their students' attendance. Teachers at MassCA use LiveLesson attendance and participation toward the overall grade in the corresponding course.

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

Contact Requirements

Webcams and Microphones

All MassCA 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. Caretakers should reach out to their student's homeroom teacher if they do not have these items.

Homeroom including Mandatory Face-to-Face Check-Ins

All students at MassCA are required to meet with their homeroom teachers regularly and there are no exceptions to this requirement. Homeroom check-ins occur daily at 8:15 a.m. and 3:15 p.m. and occur in the live lesson classroom.

For the safety of all students and as required by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, students are required to attend daily virtual face-to-face check-ins, which occur during the homeroom block at either 8:15 a.m. or 3:00 p.m. daily. The face-to-face requirement is met during LiveLesson, teacher check-in, or homeroom check-ins when the student utilizes their camera. Students are required to attend these face-to-face check-ins daily. All homeroom check-ins 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, text, and webmail to students who miss homeroom. Daily attendance in the homeroom is logged immediately following each class session.

Truancy

Caretakers and students are jointly responsible for ensuring that students meet MassCA's attendance requirements, and that the students' attendance is properly documented as described above. The 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 MassCA 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 on 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 (as defined on page 4 above).
5. Attendance and engagement are two very different dynamics, meaning, a student can be found truant if they are attending but not engaged.

* MassCA has zero tolerance for truancy. Caretakers are responsible for ensuring their student attends school and is fully participating in school (including LiveLesson participation, synchronous & asynchronous assignments, and attending check-in calls), even if they have designated another individual as their student's caretaker or learning coach. Excused and unexcused absences should not be marked by the Caretaker.

<u>To avoid truancy, the caretaker must ensure that the following activities are taking place:</u>

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 scheduled 1:1 LiveLessons with teachers.
4. The student attends all assigned LiveLesson sessions.
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, MassCA will take the following actions:

1. MassCA will notify the caretaker and initiate a formal Truancy Meeting. Participants in this meeting will include the Family Engagement Specialist (FES), the caretaker, the student, and all other relevant stakeholders. All meetings will be held via Zoom.
2. At the Truancy Meeting, a "Student Engagement 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 FES in each school is responsible for monitoring the Truancy Intervention Plan.
3. If the student does not meet the conditions of the Plan, MassCA will act, including but not limited to processes outlined below in "Investigation and Recording of Extended Absences" and withdrawing the student.

Investigation and Recording of Extended Absences

MassCA 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 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 reported as a dropout (6-12) or status unknown (K-5) in the October state report 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/or 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 are not yet engaged will be withdrawn from MassCA and marked as a dropout (for students in grades 6-12) or student status/location unknown (for students in grades K-5).
8. Throughout the school year, this process will be followed, through similar timelines, for students who do not attend for 3 days in a row.

Benefits of School Attendance

Attending school regularly has many benefits for students. These benefits include, but are not limited to:

1. Improved social connections with peers
2. Improved relationships with teachers and other school staff

3. Greater chance of achieving passing grades
4. Increased ability to graduate on cohort
5. Increased ability to promote to the next grade
6. Increased ability to participate in school clubs and functions
7. Increased preparedness for post-secondary opportunities

Academic Consequences of Excessive Absenteeism

Failure to attend school regularly has negative academic consequences that may include, but are not limited to:

1. Failure to promote
2. Failure to earn credit toward graduation
3. Extended graduation timeline
4. Withdrawal from MassCA as outlined above

Withdrawal

To initiate withdrawal , families need to notify their student's homeroom teacher, or other staff member. The notification must include the reason for withdrawal, next schooling information, and an updated address, if applicable. A withdrawal request may need to be confirmed both verbally and in writing. If next schooling information is not provided, the registrar department and/or truancy department will continue outreach to ensure that children under the age of 16 are enrolled in another school.

Dropout

If MassCA confirms with a caretaker that a student is dropping out of school, MassCA will report this decision to the state. All students that drop out will be offered an exit interview to review school options, including options to re-enroll at MassCA, the benefits of earning a high school diploma, and more. The registrar office may continue outreach to confirm the decision to drop out and to obtain next schooling information.

A dropout is defined as a student who was enrolled in school at some point during the school year, who was not enrolled on the state reporting date, has not graduated, and does not meet one of the following:

1. Transfer to another public school, private school etc.
2. Temporary school approved absences due to suspension, illness, or death.

Transfer

To report on a student as a transfer student, evidence must be provided in writing that the student does not intend to return to school.

MassCA is not able to report a non-attending student as transferred without this written evidence.

Failure to Engage

MassCA 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, Student Engagement Liaisons, FES and/or the attendance clerk daily.
7. On September 30th, all students who have not yet engaged will be withdrawn from MassCA and marked as a dropout (for students in grades 6-12) or student status/location unknown (for students in grades K-5).

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.

State Mandated & Benchmark Assessments

Renaissance STAR 360 ELA & Mathematics Assessments

All MassCA 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 grade equal to the LL exit ticket grade for the day, for example, 3/3 points. Students missing the assessments will receive a 0.

Early Literacy Screening
Early Literacy Universal Screenings are required under Massachusetts regulation 603 CMR 28.03 (1)(f), effective July 1, 2023. This regulation requires Massachusetts public schools to assess every student's reading ability from Kindergarten through Third Grade, at least twice a year. The STAR Early Literacy/Reading and Star Reading CBM assessments are used for this purpose. Following the screenings, this Massachusetts regulation also requires the school to 1) determine next steps to meet the needs of the student and then 2) within 30 school days, inform the caretaker of the results of the screening and next steps, as well as the opportunity to have a follow up discussion.

Writing Benchmark Assessment
Elementary students in grades K-5 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, for Grades 3-5, the benchmark simulates the MCAS by having students respond to an MCAS writing prompt which in turn helps them prepare for testing and other real-life scenarios requiring on-demand writing.

MCAS Testing
Students attending MassCA 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.** MassCA 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, MassCA students will be required to use their webcams during the testing sessions. Virtual MCAS testing is not guaranteed, and depends on all students participating.

- Students in grades 3-8 take the ELA and Mathematics MCAS exams.

- Students in grades 5, 8, and 9 take the Science MCAS exams.

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

MassCA 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.

MassCA 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 MassCA 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 MassCA 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.

Caretaker & Learning Coach Roles and Responsibilities

MassCA 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.

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.

Getting Ready for the School Year

Before students can begin classes, several tasks will need to be completed by the student and Caretaker. These tasks will include items such as attending a welcome call session, completing orientations, attending any required meetings, and more. All tasks are designed to support student success. Failure to complete these tasks timely may jeopardize enrollment.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

Students are expected to use their school issued Chromebook for all academic work. Students who do not use a school issued Chromebook may not have access to all required lessons, tasks, assignments, and learning opportunities. MassCA technical support does not provide support for personal devices. Enrollment begins as soon as you complete the final confirmation process. This means that you and your student must complete required tasks in the specified timelines so that classes can start timely. If you have any questions or concerns please reach out to your homeroom teacher via webmail and they will point you in the right direction.

Being a Student at MassCA

The student's role at MassCA 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 MassCA has to offer. Students are expected to adhere to the Honor Code. See the Connections Academy Honor Code DataView for more information.

Participation Expectations

At the elementary level, all MassCA students are expected to attend academic LiveLessons live unless otherwise discussed with the School Principal. Recordings are available when students are unable to attend live; however, recordings should not be relied on regularly because they do not provide the same level of engagement, interaction, or support as live instruction.

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. Assignments given during LiveLessons are required and graded and should be completed within the same timeline as other asynchronous work. Incomplete LiveLesson assignments may receive a zero in accordance with the school grading policy.

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 receive services through an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or tiered intervention supports are required to attend those services live. This may include inclusion classes, special education learning support, speech/language services, occupational therapy, virtual counseling, and other related services.

If for any reason your student's microphone or webcam is not working, contact (508) 441-6858 immediately to troubleshoot and ensure it is working properly, as these are critical tools for your student's learning.

Elementary School Curriculum Based Check ins

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 in the Live Lesson room. 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. Additional work may be assigned 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.

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, including graded assessments from Live Lesson (often referred to as 'exit tickets'). Assignments (including graded assessments from Live Lesson and portfolios that are not completed/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.

Semester Deadline-Extension Policy
No extensions for work will be granted.

Promotion and Retention
All students at MassCA are expected to:

- Attend and participate in LiveLessons
- Complete lessons on their planner and related grade level work and demonstrate proficiency on Massachusetts curriculum standards
- Participate in STAR360 and Writing benchmark testing at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year
- Attend check in calls with homeroom teachers regularly
- Meet with content teachers on a semi-regular basis
- 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.

Teachers will have regular conversations throughout the school year with caretakers 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.

Student Help and Resources
At MassCA, we want you to succeed! If you are having any issues, your primary contact is a student's homeroom teacher for all non academic concerns. Your Homeroom Teacher is the

student/family's primary point of contact and can always point you in the appropriate direction.
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.

Response to Intervention (RTI)
MTSS integrates academics, behavior, and social-emotional supports, using data to identify needs and adjust instruction. At MassCA, benchmark assessments, such as STAR and the writing benchmark, Live Lesson participation, and Curriculum based assessments and measures, are used to individualize instruction for all students.

Students who demonstrate a need for additional support, including from the results of the Early Literacy screenings described above, will receive further support through the MassCA Elementary School Building Curriculum Accommodation Plan (BCAP) or through Tier II interventions, which are a part of the Elementary School Response to Intervention (RTI).

Tier II and Tier III math and reading interventions are 30 minute small group Live Lessons taught by an interventionist that take place two to four times per week. Interventionists use evidence-based programs for these interventions. Student progress in these lessons relies heavily on active participation and response to teacher prompting, and therefore requires the use of a webcam and microphone. All students assigned to Tier II and/or Tier III interventions are required to attend.

Teachers monitor the progress of students in Tier II and Tier III math and reading intervention every two weeks. Every four to six weeks, the RTI team will meet to determine whether the assigned interventions are effective, or whether adjustments need to be made (such as student groupings, or assigned to a higher Tier, etc). If a student receiving Tier III interventions is determined not to be making effective progress after six weeks of consistent attendance and engagement, the team may refer the student to the ChildFind process for an initial evaluation to determine if the student is eligible for special education services.

Student Responsible Use of Technology Policy
Student Responsible Use Guidelines
Being part of the MassCA Community, students understand that the use of technology is a privilege for which they are responsible. When using any MassCA 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 MassCA-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 MassCA webmail/email lists, which includes creating or forwarding chain letters or pyramid schemes of any type.

While at the MassCA building or any MassCA sites, I will not knowingly and willfully use any devices or tools (cell phones, hotspots, VPNs) to bypass the MassCA network in order to gain access to the Internet.

I will use MassCA 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:
- Ask a faculty member to submit the unblock request to their building principal.
- I will only install software approved by MassCA.
- 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 MassCA trademarks, logos and symbols are for school district use only.
- I am responsible for taking all reasonable care with the MassCA network and MassCA equipment.
- I understand that all school-issued technology is the property of MassCA.
- I understand that the school district may inspect, audit, and confiscate any MassCA 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 MassCA network and MassCA equipment.
- I will ensure that my actions protect MassCA 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 MassCA-issued computer at any time to maintain the equipment in good working order.
- I understand that if my MassCA device is lost or stolen I will report it to the school immediately.

Irresponsible Use of Technology

Misuse of MassCA'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
MassCA 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.

MassCA 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 School Events

School Events
School Events and other school-sponsored events can be a valuable supplement to a student's educational experience. Any student wishing to attend school events or other school-sponsored events must submit a properly completed and signed PERMISSION FORM as well as a CONSENT AND RELEASE FORM. All students attending school school events 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 school events 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. Finally, caretakers/learning coaches attending the school event MUST have a CORI on file with the district.

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 MassCA 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 MassCA supervised events such as MCAS testing, Prom, or Graduation, students must meet the following guidelines:

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

- All students (and guests) are subject to MassCA'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.

Residency & Out of State Travel PolicyTemporary Location Change

Massachusetts Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School (MassCA) is a public school according to the state and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).

As such, a student must be a resident of Massachusetts at the time of application to MassCA and continue to be a resident of Massachusetts in order to attend MassCA. In addition, it is expected that the students at all public schools, including MassCA, actually reside in the city or town indicated on their application, which is also determined by the actual presence in the city or town, and as defined by state law.

All Massachusetts public schools are unable to offer a leave of absence for students that temporarily live outside of Massachusetts and must withdraw the students who will be out of the state for extended periods of time. There are generally no exceptions for temporary moves. Families that do not comply with this policy risk having their student(s) withdrawn from MassCA.

MassCA 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 their 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.

The MassCA enrollment process for military-connected children aligns with Massachusetts state law by adhering to the provisions of the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission

(MIC3) and the state's implementation thereof under the Valor Act (M.G.L. c. 15E) and related statutes. In practice, MassCA ensures that children of active-duty military families may enroll without undue delay, have their previous school credits and placements honoured to the extent possible, and may register remotely when necessary. By following these statutes and guidance from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, MassCA supports educational stability for military families and helps prevent discriminatory or arbitrary enrollment barriers.

Any and all requests for short-term travel outside of the state beyond one week, but less than one month shall be considered by the MassCA administration along with discussions about how the work will be made up and how special education services will be compensated.

Short-Term Travel Outside Massachusetts

A. Travel of One Week or Less
Families may travel outside Massachusetts for up to one week without submitting a formal request, provided that the student continues to engage in coursework, attendance, and meets all expectations for participation.

B. Travel Beyond One Week up to One Month
Any planned absence from Massachusetts exceeding one week but less than one month must be submitted in writing to MassCA administration in advance. The request will be reviewed and may be approved only if:

1. The student's academic progress indicates sufficient engagement;
2. The student is able to maintain required attendance or school-approved participation;
3. A plan is in place for make-up of work missed during the absence;
4. For students with special education services (IEP or 504), the family and MassCA agree on how services or compensatory instruction will be handled during and after the absence.

Approval is discretionary and based on MassCA's ability to ensure compliance with Massachusetts and federal law and DESE policy.

C. Absence or Residence Outside Massachusetts Exceeding One Month
Any absence or residence outside Massachusetts that extends beyond one month will result in withdrawal of the student from MassCA, in accordance with state law and virtual school funding requirements. As with all MassCA withdrawals, proper notification will be sent to the student's home district.

Rehabilitation Act of 1973: 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. Accommodations and services provided on Section 504 plans cannot be implemented or offered without a copy of the current plan on file with MassCA . When a student enters the school with a Section 504 plan developed by a prior school, MassCA 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 Supervisor ensures that teachers have access to a student's 504 Plan. Teachers shall be informed of their responsibilities and provided with guidance regarding the implementation of required accommodations
Students who have Section 504 plans will be educated in the regular education environment, with accommodations and supports as outlined in their 504 plans. General education teachers, (with the support of the Section 504 Supervisor or coordinator) will implement the provisions of Section 504 plans. The 504 Supervisor or Coordinator 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 accommodations on their homepage.

504 Eligibility Review
The school reviews students' Section 504 plans periodically, as needed, to ensure accommodations remain appropriate and effective. Formal reevaluation of eligibility occurs at least every three years. For students entering the school with an existing Section 504 plan, the Section 504 Supervisor or Coordinator will determine the timing of the plan review based on factors such as the date the plan was developed, its appropriateness for the current educational setting, and any changes in the student's needs or impairment.

Section 504 Accommodations
According to their Section 504 plans, some students qualify for accommodations and related supports to ensure equal access to their educational program. Due to the virtual nature of the school, these accommodations and supports are typically provided online through real-time conferencing and digital platforms. The 504 Supervisor or Coordinator ensures that all accommodations and supports are implemented in accordance with each student's Section 504 plan.

New Referrals

Throughout the school year, teachers and Learning Coaches may observe that a student is experiencing difficulty with learning and may suspect a need for additional supports under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. In these cases, the teacher may collaborate with the

Learning Coach to implement targeted strategies to support the student or refer the student to the school's intervention team.

The intervention team will meet to recommend additional supports and gather relevant information about the student's academic history and learning profile. As part of this process, the team may consult with a member of the 504 team when appropriate. If concerns persist following the implementation of these supports, or if at any time there is reason to suspect that the student may require a Section 504 plan, the team, in collaboration with the student's legal guardian, will refer the student to the Director of 504.

Pre-referral strategies are used to support the student but will not delay or deny a referral for a Section 504 evaluation. Upon receiving a referral, the 504 team will initiate the process to determine whether an evaluation is warranted and whether the student is eligible for a Section 504 plan.

Federal law requires MassCA to provide its students, regardless of disability, with an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from the school's education program. MassCA 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 MassCA's education program, please contact the school's Special Education Supervisor or the Supervisor of 504s. You can also obtain 24- hour technical support by calling the Accessibility Hotline at 888-639-5960.

MassCA Multilingual Learners Program

Welcome to the Multilingual Learners Program at MAssCA. We are committed to supporting the academic and social needs of all Multi-Language Learners (MLs) and ensuring that multilingual students can participate meaningfully and equitably in all educational programs. A Multi-Language Learner is a student whose home language is a language other than English and who has been identified as needing English language support based on results from a MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)v approved/mandatory English language assessment. Visit here to learn all about the MassCA ML Program serving over 100 students who speak a variety of 35 languages!

MassCA Department of Special Education

Greetings:

Welcome to the Special Education Department at Massachusetts Connections Academy (MassCA) (MassCA). At MassCA, 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. We are also responsible for implementing and monitoring Special Education Laws and Regulations.

We look forward to seeing you on the first day of school to kick off the new year! The Special Education Department is committed to working with students, and their families to provide a Free and Appropriate Education. 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 educational needs. A strong partnership between teachers, students and learning coaches, results in the best learning outcomes for students at MassCA!

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact one of us at sped-staff@MassCAschool.org. We are 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 special education teacher introducing themselves. We look forward to working with you and supporting your academic, emotional and personal growth.

Sincerely,
MassCA Department of Special Education

Special Education Department Contact Information

To reach the Special Education Department please call (774) 335-5401

Services for Special Education

Massachusetts Connections Academy (MassCA) (MassCA) Commonwealth Virtual School is committed to providing equal access to its online education program to students with disabilities in accordance with federal and state law. MassCA is committed to providing its students with an equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, the school's education program. MassCA proudly offers special education services, providing students access to resources tailored to their individual abilities and needs, including, but not limited to, assistive technologies, direct instruction, and related services.

MassCA offers virtual special education services to students who have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). These services include consultation, curriculum accommodations and modifications, collaboration with Learning Coaches and general education teachers, direct instruction from certified special education teachers, and substantially separate special education classes.It is mandatory for students to attend the special education services as outlined in the IEP. This includes services within the general education setting and special education support.

Failure to attend will impact MassCA's ability to provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and will result in the need for MassCA to report the lack of FAPE to the Bureau of Special Education.
MassCA also provides students with IEPs a wide range of related services, as appropriate. When an eligible student enrolls in MassCA, the IEP Team or Section 504 Team convenes to develop suitable interventions for the virtual environment.

MassCA engages with parents and Learning Coaches through the Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC). The Council serves in an advisory capacity to the MassCA administration and includes the special education manager. The SEPAC bylaws are available at MassCA SEPAC bylaws. If you would like to participate in the MassCA Special Education Parent Advisory Council, please contact the MassCA office at 774-315-5123 Ext. 361.

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Special Education (DESE) provides a range of resources related to students with disabilities. These may be found at this link. Parent's Notice of Procedural Safeguards may be found here.

Records Process

MassCA strives to provide students with a high-quality, innovative, virtual public-school experience through access to education that empowers students to demonstrate respect, life skills, growth mindset, critical thinking, communication skills, and application of knowledge to prepare them for the next stage of their life's journey. To help make that process quick and straightforward, we have three links below that can be used to support the records process.

For any questions or concerns, please email registrar@massca.org. (All emails will be answered within two business days of submission.

For additional information regarding special education, please visit: Special Education Laws and Regulations.

Parental Safeguards for your review: Parent Information - Special Education (mass.edu)

Important Facts:

- The district is legally responsible for ensuring FAPE (Free and Appropriate Public Education).
- All special education services regardless if the school setting is virtual or brick and mortar are mandated if they are agreed upon through a signed and accepted IEP.
- Caretaker/Learning Coach involvement is essential in student learning and a requirement per the MassCA program.
- If a student does not make progress toward meeting IEP goals due to lack of engagement, the Team will reconvene to discuss the lack of progress and if services provided at MassCA are appropriate for the student. At this meeting the student's overall attendance, engagement and academic progress will be reviewed. If it is determined the level of student need exceeds MassCA programming, the Team will discuss next steps; including inviting the student's district of residence to the next IEP meeting.

Initial Referrals for Special Education

Although students may be provided with a variety of supports, strategies, and interventions in the general education setting, they may not make effective progress, even after several interventions have been implemented. For this reason, a student may be referred for an initial evaluation to determine whether they qualify for special education services. Legal guardian(s), students eighteen years of age or older, or any individual in a professional or caregiving position may refer a student for an evaluation regarding the student's development.

The steps to the referral process are as follows (sections cited per Massachusetts Regulations 603 CMR 28.04):

- Individual e.g. legal guardian(s)or student over 18 years of age, sends a written or verbal request for an evaluation directly to the Director of Special Education or their designee.
- It is beneficial if the request contains specific information related to the suspected area of the disability.
- Within five school days of receiving the written or verbal request for the referral, the Director of Special Education or their designee will send a written notice (N1 form), shall seek consent for the evaluation to occur (consent form), and shall provide legal guardian(s) with the opportunity to express any concerns or provide information on the student's skills or abilities. Under very limited circumstances, a referral for initial evaluation of a student may be denied. A copy of the Notice of Procedural Safeguards will also be included in the referral packet.
- The consent form notes all of the evaluations to be conducted and includes space for the legal guardian(s) to provide written consent to the evaluation.
- The legal guardian(s) may meet with the Director of Special Education or their designee to discuss the reasons for the referral and evaluation process.
- Referrals may also come from the individual school's student support teams, or their equivalents.
    - Student support teams, or their equivalent, are designed to ensure that appropriate supports and services are being implemented in the general education setting.
    - Especially when all interventions have been tried, there may be times when the student is then referred for an evaluation to determine whether special education services are needed.
- The reevaluation process provides for evaluations to be proposed and conducted, with legal guardian(s) consent, at least every three years or sooner for students already receiving special education services
- Legal guardian(s)permission is needed in writing via the consent form in order for the evaluation to start. **NO** assessments may be started without written consent from the legal guardian(s)

Child Find Obligations

Staff who suspect a student of having an undiagnosed disability should inform the Director of Special Education or their designee. If the Director of Special Education or their designee, after reviewing the request, believes an assessment is warranted, legal guardian(s) consent for the

assessment to evaluate the child in the area of suspected disability will be requested. When a student enrolls in MassCA and the legal guardian(s) indicates the student is eligible for special education services but no IEP is provided, the special education administrative assistant will follow up with the legal guardian(s) and the home district special education administrator. If MassCA has not received the IEP within four weeks of enrollment, a request to conduct an initial evaluation will be sent to the legal guardian(s) for signature. District Request for IEP Legal Guardian(s) Request for IEP` Request for Initial Team Meeting without Record.

Discipline and Due Process

Overview

All students enrolled in MassCA 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

MassCA 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, MassCA 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 MassCA 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 MassCA 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.

Connections Academy Honor Code K-5

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
- Be honest
- Never copy someone else's work
- Never give my work or answers to others
- Never look up the answer to an assessment (i.e., test or quiz) online or in a book
- Never receive help on assessments (i.e., test or quiz), including from my friends/peers, Learning Coach, or any others
- Never share educational material found on Pearson Online Classroom or provided by my school with other students. This includes posting assignments and assessments online
- Never use Artificial Intelligence (AI) generators for an assignment, unless the assignment specifically asks for or requires its use
- Follow all Connections Academy Student Conduct guidelines for use of the Internet and Connections' equipment and materials provided
- 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.

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 their 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:

1. the disciplinary offense;
2. the basis for the charge;
3. the potential consequences, including the potential length of the student's suspension;
4. 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;
5. the date, time, and location of the hearing;
6. 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 their 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 their 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:

1. 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;
2. 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;
3. 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
4. The right to cross-examine witnesses presented by the school district;

5. 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:
6. Identify the disciplinary offense, the date on which the hearing took place, and the participants at the hearing;
    a. Set out key facts and conclusions reached by the principal;
    b. Identify the length and effective date of the suspension, as well as a date of return to school;
    c. 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.
    d. Inform the student of the right to appeal the principal's decision to the superintendent or their 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 their 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 their 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 disability 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 students with disabilities:
    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 student with disabilities or impairment 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 Director or Director of 504s of the suspendable offense of a student with a disability and a record will be kept of such notices.
    c. When a suspension constitutes a change in placement of a student with a disability, 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 make a finding, a "Manifestation Determination", as

to the relationship between the student's misconduct and their 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 district will:

1. Conduct a functional behavioral assessment and develop a behavioral implementation plan, *or* review and modify an existing plan as needed. 34 CFR § 300.530(f)(1)(i)-(ii)
2. ***And*** return student to placement *unless* (1) parent and district agree to a different placement, (2) hearing officer orders new placement, or (3) removal is for "special circumstances" under 34 CFR § 300.530(g).

If the conduct was a direct result of failure to implement the IEP, the district must take immediate steps to remedy those deficiencies. 34 CFR § 300.530(e)(3)

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, MassCA 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.MassCA will develop a plan that describes which educational opportunities will be 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/or the family'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 of 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:

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;

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;

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,

The right to cross-examine witnesses presented by the school;

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 their 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 their 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 their 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

MassCA adheres to the Massachusetts anti-bullying laws that require that each bullying prevention and intervention plan (full plan linked HERE) 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.

MassCA 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 participant 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, school events, 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 school events

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 Massachusetts Connections Academy (MassCA) & MassCA 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;
- MassCA'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 MassCA concluded discrimination or harassment occurred, a description of MassCA'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, MassCA 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 MassCA, an individual may file a formal complaint with the government agency or agencies set forth below. Using MassCA'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
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. MassCA 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 their 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.

MassCA'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.

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 MassCA that do or may receive Federal financial assistance.

Under the Final Rule, MassCA 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 MassCA'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 MassCA.

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 MassCA 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 MassCA 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 MassCA'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 MassCA 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-MassCA-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

MassCA 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 MassCA'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 MassCA'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, MassCA 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, MassCA 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 MassCA, 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 MassCA. 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, MassCA 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 MassCA'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 MassCA'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.

MassCA Substance Use Prevention & Abuse Education Policy

As required by state and federal law, Massachusetts Connections Academy (MassCA) 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 MassCA 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 their 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 MassCA 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

Student Records

MassCA maintains digital files of all student records. A complete student record is needed to support a positive transition to MassCA. In accordance with 603 CMR 23.10(4)(g), all student records will be requested from the sending school once an offer of enrollment has been accepted.

Caretakers may also be asked to provide records. Failure to provide MassCA with records may delay a student's start date.

In accordance with 603 CMR 23.10(4)(g), MassCA will provide authorized personnel of a school to which a student seeks or intends to transfer or has transferred with a copy of the student's record.

MassCA will comply with 603 CMR 23.06 regarding the destruction of hard copies of student records. MassCA primarily maintains digital files, and requests that all records be shared with us digitally.

- Student transcripts will be maintained for 60 years following the student's graduation, withdrawal, or transfer.
- During the time a student is enrolled at MassCA, the principal or his/her designee shall periodically review and destroy misleading, outdated, or irrelevant information contained in the temporary record, provided that the eligible student and his/her parent are notified in writing and are given the opportunity to receive the information or a copy of it prior to its destruction. A copy of such notice shall be placed in the temporary record.
- When MassCA receives paper records, parents or eligible students will be notified of the destruction date and given an opportunity to retrieve the records from MassCA's office.
- Eligible parents and students may request hard copies of records prior to destruction.
- Digital copies of Special Education records will be maintained for seven years.

A copy of 603 CMR 23.00 is available to Caretakers upon request.