



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

**TEC CONNECTIONS ACADEMY**

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**MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT HANDBOOK**

**2024-2025**

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## **A Note from the Principal**

Hello TECCA Middle School Families:

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

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

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

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

Warmest Regards,  
TECCA Middle School Administration

## General District Information

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

### 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 to the 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.).



## TEC Connections Academy (TECCA) Commonwealth Virtual School

### District Overview

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

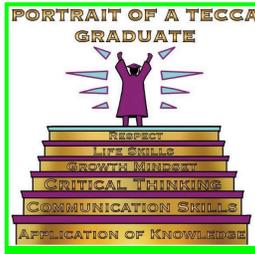
### TECCA's Core Values

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

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

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

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



## TECCA's Portrait of a Graduate

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Life Skills** - TECCA graduates will acquire skills that will be transferable to a variety of contexts including the workplace, personal and social settings. These include organizational skills, financial management, communication skills, decision-making and problem-solving skills, self-awareness,

time management, navigating and managing conflict, self-regulation, resilience, self-advocacy, empathy for others, and perseverance.

## **Master Calendar**

The TECCA master calendar can be found in the Virtual Library within Connexus and on the TEC Connections academy website.

## **Enrollment**

It is important for enrolling students and families to balance the reasons for enrolling in TECCA with their ability and willingness to meet the expectations and responsibilities articulated in this School Handbook. The school will provide support for students to enhance their success in online learning before the students start significant coursework. Throughout the enrollment process and post-enrollment, TECCA will work closely with families to help them be successful in the online environment. If you have any questions regarding enrollment, please contact our Registrar, Raquel Binsack at 774-335-5241.

## **Residency**

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

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

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

TECCA also abides by all applicable federal, state, and local statutes, policies, and guidelines for student enrollment and will not impose enrollment requirements that are inconsistent with these policies and guidelines, including compliance with the McKinney-Vento Act regarding homeless students. The school leader or 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 TECCA until the age of 21 for general education students, and 22 for special education students. In order to verify legal name, date of birth, and to confirm any age eligibility requirements are met, applicants for kindergarten or who are entering 1st grade having not attended kindergarten must submit a copy of the student's official birth certificate. If a student does not have a birth certificate, TECCA will accept alternative documentation such as a religious, hospital, or physician's certificate showing date of birth; an adoption record; an affidavit from a parent; or previously verified school records; or any other documents. Students in other grades may also submit a copy of the student's official birth certificate or a passport, green card, baptismal or birth record. TECCA will not bar or discourage a student from attending school because the student lacks a birth certificate.

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

Students who have been suspended from another school and who are eligible to return to that school system, but who wish to enroll in TECCA, will be required to submit a disciplinary history to TECCA during the enrollment process. If a student has been expelled from another school they are required to submit a disciplinary history to TECCA during the enrollment process which will be reviewed by the school principal who will make a final decision regarding enrollment & 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/Learning Coaches are expected to complete a Getting Started orientation course within 1 week of enrolling.

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

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

### **Dual Enrollment in another K-12 Public School**

A student is not allowed to enroll in TECCA while being enrolled in another public school. It is incumbent upon the Caretaker to officially notify the "District of Residence" of their student's

withdrawal upon enrollment at TECCA. Failure to do so may result in immediate withdrawal. This statement is acknowledged by parents/legal guardians prior to final confirmation.

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

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

### **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 middle school. For example, if the student was retained at their former school they will be retained at TECCA as well.

## **6-8 Placement**

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

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

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

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

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

### **6th – 8th Placement Changes during the School Year**

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

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

### **Academic Intervention Grades 6-8**

School staff are continually monitoring student data to ensure all students have equitable access to the support that they need. As part of this process, our core teachers, math, and reading interventionists use Star, gradebook, MCAS, observational, and other data to determine if a student may benefit from some additional support. If a student is assigned to work with one of our middle school math or reading interventionists, they will be required to attend. Ability to attend these assigned lessons is part of how we provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), as required by Massachusetts, to all of our students. Failure to be available for these assigned sessions, may result in a referral to our Truancy process.

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

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

### **Transcripts**

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

Caretakers will be able to view a copy of the transcript through the Connexus.

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

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

### **Physical Education**

In accordance with MA General Law - Part I, Title XII, Chapter 71, Section 3, all TECCA students will be required to take one PE course per grade for the purpose of promoting the physical well-being of all students. Instruction in physical education may include calisthenics,

gymnastics and military drill; but no pupil shall be required to take part in any military exercise if his parent or guardian is of any religious denomination conscientiously opposed to bearing arms, or is themselves so opposed, and the school committee is so notified in writing; and no pupil shall be required to take part in physical education exercises if a licensed physician certifies in writing that in his opinion such physical education exercises would be injurious to the pupil.

### **District Attendance Policy**

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

#### **Required Instructional Hours**

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

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

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

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

Caretakers must enter student attendance in Connexus daily. The homeroom teacher verifies that the attendance records are accurate by reviewing face to face check-in attendance, LiveLesson attendance, lessons/assessment completion, attendance at regularly scheduled meetings, and through conversations with the students.

Daily Student Attendance expectations include:

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

Homeroom teachers monitor attendance completion daily. Attendance hours that are entered, but which are not substantiated by the student’s lesson completion, or verified through

conversations with the student's caretaker, may be retroactively changed by the homeroom teacher or attendance coordinator.

### **Absences**

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

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

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

### **Attendance/Contact Intervention System**

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

The homeroom teacher will continue to follow our contact policy of calling daily until contact has been made.

After the third attempt of no contact, the Attendance Coordinator will send written notification that contact has not been made.

If contact is not made within 1 school day, the family will receive outreach from an administrator that they must contact their homeroom teacher immediately.

After this attempt, if no contact is made, the homeroom teacher with the support of the school counselor will request a welfare check via the local police department.

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

- Approaching Alarm for attendance (71%-85% of the expected hours over the course of three weeks) is an indicator that the student has not been attending as expected. Once a student enters Approaching Alarm for attendance, they will receive written communication indicating that they are at risk of truancy, and will receive a referral to the Student Engagement Liaison.

- 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 FEC, student, parent, and other school staff (homeroom teacher, counselor, etc.) as appropriate.
- A student who remains in Alarm for attendance for more than 4 weeks is at risk of being withdrawn due to truancy.

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

The attendance codes will be implemented in the following manner:

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

### **Attendance Responsibilities by Role**

#### **Caretaker Responsibilities**

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

- Indicate the number of hours (0, 5 for elementary school students, or 0, 6 for middle and high school students)
- Refer to the Required Instructional Hours section of this Handbook for important information on minimum weekly recommended hours, and ensure students spend the required time in schooling activities.
- Enter a Vacation Day (V) for all school holidays and vacations.
- Only enter weekend hours if a student has undertaken educational activity, otherwise weekend days should be left blank.

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

- Students have a designated number of vacation days for the school year based on the school year calendar, and that number cannot be exceeded. Students who exceed the allotted vacation days will enter “Vacation Escalation” any vacation days taken beyond those allotted will be considered unexcused absences.
- Families and staff can track the number of remaining vacation days in the “Students Vacation Day Tracking” Dataview.
- Vacation days may not be used during mandatory state testing days.

- If a parent is requesting an excused absence for a medical reason, the parent or caretaker must submit a webmail to the homeroom teacher within three days of the absence.
- A doctor's note is required for all absences beyond 3 in a row or 5 in one semester.

Students who miss work at any point are responsible for completing that work within the late work submission policy established by their school as outlined in the student Handbook.

Unsubmitted work will be given a zero.

### **Homeroom Teacher Responsibilities**

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

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

### **Student Engagement Liaisons and Family Engagement Specialist Responsibilities**

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

- Daily study halls.
- Goal Setting Practices, Academic Growth plans, etc..
- Regular and mandatory meetings between the family and the engagement Team

- Additional scheduled meetings with teachers.
- FESs track students from the beginning of the truancy process through to either successful re-engagement or the return to sending district.
- Student Engagement and/or FESs schedule and lead all truancy/engagement meetings with students, caretakers, and the Team.

### **Attendance Clerk Responsibilities**

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

**Review Attendance Records** – The attendance clerk monitors and reviews attendance records on a daily basis.

**Monitor Attendance Issues** – The school’s Attendance clerk monitors student attendance. They contact families with low attendance rates, and work to help them stay in compliance.

**Maintaining the Integrity of the Attendance Data** – After seven days, the attendance system is locked and days prior cannot be edited. Any requests for adjustments to the previously verified records must go to the Attendance Clerk in writing for review, approval and adjustment.

## **Attendance Reporting**

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

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

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

Students who have blank attendance will receive a call & text within three business days.

Students who are missing attendance hours from the week prior will receive a call on Monday reminding them of the attendance expectations.

Students who have not had a face to face check-in in the last five days will receive a call and a text.

Students who do not log in for greater than 2 school days, do not have attendance logged, and do not have a vacation day or excused absence will receive a call and a text.

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

Outreach for Special Education students will be the same as above, in addition, the special education team will notify the parent that the student is in violation of meeting the attendance

and participation requirements and discuss possible strategies, support, etc. The parent will also be notified that if the student continues to violate these requirements, the Team may be reconvened to review current services/supports and placement and that a representative from the student's home district will be invited to attend to discuss changes in services and/or placement.

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

Outreach to 504 students will follow the procedures listed above. Additionally, 504 team meetings will be scheduled for 504 students that are not meeting attendance and participation requirements. This team will consist of the Director of 504s and Student Analytics or designee, school counselor, one academic teacher and one school level administrator in addition the Caretaker and students over the age of 14. Additional team members may be invited as appropriate. At this meeting the 504 Plan will be reviewed and engagement/truancy recommendations will be discussed.

### **LiveLesson Attendance Expectations**

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

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

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

## **Contact Requirements**

### **Webcams and Microphones**

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

### **Homeroom Check in Calls/Meetings**

All students at TECCA are assigned a homeroom teacher. Each student and their caretaker will be required to attend a Welcome Meeting to assist in their transition into TECCA or the new school year. After the completion of the Welcome Meeting, students will be required to meet with their homeroom teachers when requested. Teachers & Student Engagement Liaisons may request a check-in for attendance or performance concerns, end of year calls, MCAS reminders, etc.. Students and caretakers are encouraged to reach out to their homeroom teacher if questions/concerns arise. If the homeroom teacher is unable to assist in the matter, the caretaker and/or student will be referred to the correct contact or resource.

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

For the safety of all students and as required by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, students are required to attend at least one virtual face to face check-ins, which will be offered at least twice daily in a LiveLesson room. Students are required to attend a face to face check-in daily. All meetings and calls will be completed in the LiveLesson room to allow for face to face interaction between the student and staff member. Homeroom teachers will reach out via phone to students who miss a scheduled homeroom meeting. Please refer to your student's planner for Face to Face offerings.

## **District Truancy**

Caretakers and students are jointly responsible for ensuring that students meet TECCA's attendance requirements, and that the student's attendance is properly documented as described above. School administration is responsible for enforcing the Massachusetts Public School Attendance Laws.

Students not attending school as mandated by law will be considered truant.

Truancy at TECCA is defined as:

- Three (3) or more days of consecutive unexcused absences and/or days in which no work has been completed.
- Five (5) or more days in which no work has been completed within a six-month period.
- Not meeting the state-mandated minimum number of hours per week on a regular basis (See "Required Attendance Hours").
- Low participation or lesson completion rate.

- Attendance and engagement are two very different dynamics, meaning, a student can be found truant if they are attending but not engaged.

\*TECCA's response to truancy is individualized and collaborative to identify potential supports that can be offered to students and families. If truancy concerns continue after the implementation of identified supports, the student is at risk of disciplinary action up to and including withdrawal from the school. Caretakers are responsible for ensuring their student is fully participating in school, even if they have designated another individual as their student's caretaker. If the student does not meet attendance requirements as described above, then attendance hours should not be marked by the caretaker.

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

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

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

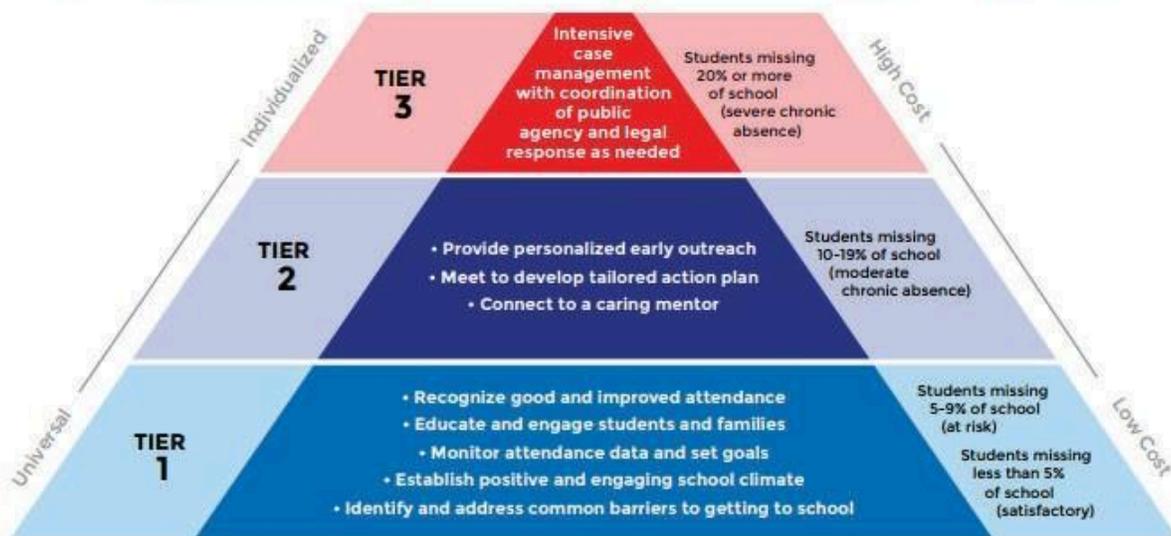
1. TECCA will notify the caretaker and initiate a formal Truancy Meeting. Participants in this meeting will include the Family Engagement Specialist (FES), the caretaker, the student, and all other relevant stakeholders.
2. At the Truancy Meeting, a "Truancy Intervention Plan" which outlines the steps and actions required to support a student out of truancy status will be developed. This plan will support the belief that if the student follows the prescribed steps, the student will no longer be in truancy status. The FESs in each school are responsible for monitoring the Truancy Intervention Plan. If the student is a special education student, this will also be held as a reconvene meeting to discuss student progress and a notice will be provided to the parent documenting the requirements that the student must fulfill moving forward.
3. If the student does not meet the conditions of the Truancy Plan, TECCA will take action, including but not limited to returning the student to their sending district. If the student is a special education student, the Team will hold a placement meeting to discuss whether or not the student can access a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) at TECCA. A representative from the student's home district will be invited to participate as a member of the placement Team. (See Massachusetts special education regulation 603 CMR 28.10 (6). 504 students and their Caretakers will be invited to attend a 504 team meeting to review the plan before withdrawal/RTSD decisions occur

## Failure to Engage

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

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

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



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

## **Withdrawing from TECCA**

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

## **State Mandated & Benchmark Assessments**

### **Renaissance STAR 360 ELA & Mathematics Assessments**

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

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

Students in grades 6-8 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 will receive an assessment grade in the gradebook.

### **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**

Middle School students in grades 6-8 are also required to complete Writing Benchmark assessments three times per year. The purpose of these assessments is provide students the opportunity to engage in an on-demand writing task that will provide their teachers essential data about their ability to inform writing instruction. In addition, the benchmark simulates the

MCAS by having students respond to an MCAS writing prompt which in turn helps students prepare for MCAS testing and other real-life scenarios requiring on-demand writing. Grading for this assessment will be tied to the completion of both the Writing Benchmark and Star Reading.

### **MCAS Testing**

Students attending TECCA are required to participate in the state testing, known as the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). There is no “opt out” option for MCAS exams. TECCA courses are aligned to the MA curriculum state standards, where instructional activities and assessments are thoughtfully crafted to help prepare students for the content they will encounter on the MCAS assessments. These tests measure academic achievement of all public school students in the Commonwealth. Parents/Caretakers are expected to know the MCAS assessment dates. Test sites are assigned by region, concerns regarding test site or time are submitted through a google form. There is not a guarantee that site or time can be changed. In the event that MCAS is proctored virtually, TECCA students will be required to use their webcams during the testing sessions.

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

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

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

Each multilingual learner shall participate, consistent with section 1I of chapter 69, in the statewide assessment system. Students attending TECCA whose first language is not English and who have been identified as Multilingual Learners (ML) are required to participate in the state testing program for English Learners known as WIDA/ ACCESS testing. Initially, the WIDA screener is used to assess a student's English language skills upon enrollment. The ACCESS test assesses a student's English proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing and the results of this assessment are used to determine program placement. The Supervisor of ML Programs, along with TECCA teachers, will work with families to schedule both initial screening and ACCESS testing days. Parents/Caretakers will be informed of their student's location and are responsible for transportation to the testing location. Additionally, transportation assistance is available upon request.

### **Caretaker & Learning Coach Roles and Responsibilities**

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

It is absolutely essential that the learning coach is an active participant in the student's learning experience. This is a daily commitment requiring effort, attention, and consistency in order to ensure student success. The learning coach is the adult who performs tasks such as recording attendance, reviewing lessons, providing supervision, ensuring engagement, and communicating with teachers on a regular basis. Each student will have at least one learning coach who is usually the student's caretaker.

As a reminder, during the enrollment process all Parent/Legal Guardians (Caretaker) agreed to the following learning coach responsibilities:

- I consent to my student(s) attending all mandatory meetings and standardized tests required by the school.
- I understand that I will be financially responsible for any school property that is provided to me, including property that becomes damaged, excluding normal wear and tear, is moved to another location, or is not returned when requested by the school. I have read and understand the Regulatory Program Description, including information about the need for adult supervision for students.
- I am responsible for ensuring that the student has a suitable place for schooling and will be physically available in the same location as the student during learning activities to the extent required by law.

- I will be responsible for ensuring that the student completes his or her work and makes adequate progress as defined by my student's teacher(s). I will schedule enough time in my day to support the student and submit the required work.
- I will mark the student absent or present for each school day according to the procedures established by the school.
- I agree to participate and ensure that the student participates in regular telephone, email, web conferencing (LiveLesson® presentations) or, if required, in-person contacts with a teacher, as directed by the school.
- I agree to use Connexus daily, when possible, and not less than three times per week.

### **Learning Coach Central and Mentorship Program**

TECCA also has a learning coach Mentor Program. If you would like to volunteer to be a Learning Coach Mentor, would like a mentor, and/or would like more information regarding our Learning Coach Mentorship Program, please contact our Director of 504s & Student Analytics, (774) 335-5228. Learning coaches can also prepare for their role by exploring the many family support resources that TECCA offers. Go to your Connexus Homepage, select the Links tab, then select Learning Coach Central to select from a variety of resources.

### **Getting Ready for the School Year**

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

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

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

If you are using your own computer, take time to review the system requirements in "Connexus Help," which can be accessed via the MORE tab on the Toolbar on your Connexus homepage to ensure you are set up properly. Enrollment begins as soon as you complete the final confirmation process. This means that your student should start working the day final confirmation is made; you do not need to wait for materials to arrive as they are all available

online via Connexus. If you have any questions or concerns please reach out to your homeroom teacher via webmail and they will point you in the right direction.

## **Being a Student at TECCA**

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

### **Participation Expectations**

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

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

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

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

## **Middle School Advisory Program**

### **Overview**

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

## **Middle School Curriculum Based Check ins**

TECCA recognizes that students can (and should) demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways. As part of each 6-8 core academic course semester grade, all students are required to demonstrate their learning via a curriculum-based check-in meeting with a teacher for each of these courses once per semester. These meetings are centered around discussing the course content and are conducted in the teacher's LiveLesson room. The teacher check-in meeting counts as an assessment grade (students will receive 100% for participation) and must be completed individually. Alternatively, if a student does not participate in the required teacher check-in meeting with each teacher every semester, they will receive a Zero in their gradebook. Additional support may be offered to students as a result of this call. Students are expected to engage with the support plan for any given course to ensure we are able to provide a Free and Appropriate Public Educational experience to all of our students. Students who do not participate in these support plans may be considered disengaged and referred to our Family Engagement Specialist for engagement support.

## **Middle School Grading Policy**

The new middle school grading policy is that students will have two weeks after the close of a unit to complete all of the assignments/assessments within the unit. Any work left incomplete following this period will receive a permanent zero. Teachers will communicate these deadlines in weekly newsletters as well as on their message boards. Students who have extenuating circumstances should contact the teacher to see if additional time is appropriate for a given circumstance.

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

**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 outside of extenuating circumstances. 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, WebMail corrections, 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 outlined above.

**Portfolio Resubmit Policy:** Students may resubmit a portfolio up to one time. Prior to resubmitting the portfolio, students may be asked to 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**

All students are expected to complete all work by 3:15 pm on the final day of each semester. No extensions for work will be granted.

### **Honor Roll Criteria**

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

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

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

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

### **Promotion and Retention**

All students at TECCA are expected to:

- Attend and participate in LiveLessons, or watch recordings if unable to attend live
- Complete lessons on their planner and related grade level work and demonstrate proficiency on Massachusetts curriculum standards
- Participate in STAR360 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 TECCA, 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. Homeroom Teachers are assigned upon enrollment, and will host introductory welcome meetings for their homeroom several times at the start of each semester, which provides an orientation to all-things TECCA. Families may also utilize Connexus Help, which has a wealth of information. To get to Connexus Help, select the MORE tab on your toolbar in Connexus and then select the Help button. If you need Connexus login or Connexus technical support, please Technical Support at 800-382-6010 or send a Webmail message to Technical Support.

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

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

#### Student Responsible Use Guidelines

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

- I am responsible for being prepared for learning.
- If provided a TECCA-owned laptop, I will report any breakage or technical issues to the Technology Help Desk when they occur and I will be provided a loaner if appropriate and available.
- While in LiveLesson, I will free myself of personal distractions and only use technology when instructed by my teacher.
- I will practice appropriate behavior and contributions on websites, social media, discussion boards, media sharing sites, and all other electronic communications, including new technology.
- I will be honest and respectful in all digital communication.
- I understand that what I do and post online must not disrupt school activities or compromise school safety and security of others.

- I will not spam TECCA webmail/email lists, which includes creating or forwarding chain letters or pyramid schemes of any type.

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

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

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

- I understand all TECCA trademarks, logos and symbols are for school district use only.
- I am responsible for taking all reasonable care with the TECCA network and TECCA equipment.
- I understand that all school-issued technology is the property of TECCA.
- I understand that the school district may inspect, audit, and confiscate any TECCA device at any point in time.
- I understand that vandalism in any form including stickers is prohibited.
- I will respect my and others' use and access to the TECCA network and TECCA equipment.
- I will ensure that my actions protect TECCA technology.
- I understand that I should not tamper with, or attempt to bypass any of the controls in place (i.e., reinstall the operating system, modify the software image or disassemble the computer).
- I am responsible for the data I create and for protecting it.
- I understand the school district provides me with a Google account to save and store all my data and files.
- I understand that I will not have access to my school email and data after graduation or after leaving the district.
- I understand it is my responsibility to save any data or files that I create. I understand I should not save or store personal data or files on any device.
- I understand that the school district may reimage my TECCA-issued computer at any time to maintain the equipment in good working order.
- I understand that if my TECCA device is lost or stolen I will report it to the school immediately.

### **Irresponsible Use of Technology**

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

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

### **Disclaimer**

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

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

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

### **Field Trips**

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

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

- 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 TECCA's Student Handbook, Code of Conduct, and to follow the rules, regulations, and laws that govern student behavior. Administration may search, when reasonable suspicion exists, students' personal belongings, and/or the vehicle they traveled in, to ascertain a student's safety and well-being.
- Students MAY be turned away at school events if the above criteria are not followed. In addition, it is the responsibility of the student who attends an Event without a parent, legal guardian, or designated adult to do the following:
  - Obey all time schedules
  - Obey all school rules including maintaining acceptable attendance and disciplinary standards.
  - Adhere to school rules and procedures for Events.

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

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

### **Temporary Location Change**

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

Principal's designee for approval. These forms must be completed and submitted one month prior to the relocation. In emergency situations pertaining to relocation, please contact the Principal or Assistant Principal immediately. No location transfer requests will be granted beyond one semester's length and students must be present in Massachusetts for MCAS testing with no exception. Failure to be present at MCAS may jeopardize enrollment due to breach of Location Transfer Request Form Contract.

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

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

### **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 TECCA . When a student enters the school with a Section 504 plan developed by a prior school, TECCA will review the plan and supporting documentation and comply with Section 504.

### **During the School Year**

At the beginning of the school year, the 504 Coordinator ensures that teachers have access to a student's 504 Plan. The teachers are made aware of each student's 504 Plan, and are given guidance on how to make the necessary program accommodations. Students who have Section 504 plans will participate in the regular education environment, with the use of accommodations and services as outlined in the plan. The regular education teachers (with the support of the Section 504 coordinator) will implement the provisions of Section 504 plans. The Director or Supervisor of 504s 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 will annually review students' 504 plans and continued eligibility every three years. For students who enter the School with an existing Section 504 plan, the Section 504 Coordinator will schedule the review of the plan based on the following: when the plan was developed, the appropriateness of the plan for virtual schooling, changes to the student's impairment, etc.

### **Section 504 Accommodations**

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

### **New Referrals**

Throughout the year, both teachers and Learning Coaches may detect that a student is having difficulties with learning and they may believe there could be a need for accommodations and modifications, supplemental aids, and services as required under Section 504. The teacher may first help the Learning Coach implement a series of recommendations to support the student or may refer the student to the school's intervention team. This Team will meet and suggest additional strategies and considerations, and they will also work to gather more

information about the student's learning history and profile. They may even consult with a member of the 504 Team. If after all the recommended strategies fail or if it is believed at any time that the student requires a 504 Plan, the Team (along with the legal guardian) will refer to the school's Director of 504s. Any pre-referral interventions will not be used to delay a 504 evaluation. Once the Team receives the referral they will begin the process of determining if the student is in need of evaluations and a Section 504 plan.

Federal law requires TECCA to provide its students, regardless of disability, with an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from the school's education program. TECCA is committed to providing its students with equal access to its education program. We provide students with accessibility through resources tailored to each student's individual abilities and needs, including assistive technologies and individualized support.

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

## **TECCA Department of Special Education**

Greetings:

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

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact one of us at [sped-staff@teccaschool.org](mailto:sped-staff@teccaschool.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,  
TECCA Department of Special Education

### **Special Education Department Contact Information**

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

Title	Person and Number
Interim Director of Special Education	Ms. Marcia Berkowitz, 774-335-5405
Assistant Director of Special Education	Mrs. Megan Konikowski, 774-335-5323
Executive Assistant to Special Education	Mrs. Michelle Tucker, 774-335-5383
Administrative Assistant to Special Education	Ms. Cheyenne Reed, 774-335-5401
Special Education Supervisor - Elementary	Mr. Carl Tillona, 774-335-5523
Special Education Supervisor - Middle School	Mrs. Justine McKinnon, 774-335-5345
Special Education Supervisor- High School	Dr. Maureen Shaw, 774-335-5339
K-12 Special Education Data Supervisor	Mr. Sam Davis, 774-335-5388

### **Services for Special Education**

TEC Connections Academy (TECCA) 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. TECCA is committed to providing its students with an equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, the school’s education program. TECCA 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.

TECCA 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 TECCA's ability to provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and will result in the need for TECCA to report the lack of FAPE to the Bureau of Special Education.

TECCA also provides students with IEPs a wide range of related services, as appropriate. When an eligible student enrolls in TECCA, the IEP Team or Section 504 Team convenes to develop suitable interventions for the virtual environment.

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

TECCA 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.

If you are a current or former Caretaker/Student at TECCA, please use this link to submit your request.

For any questions or concerns, please email [sped-staff@teccaschool.org](mailto:sped-staff@teccaschool.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 TECCA 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 TECCA 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 TECCA 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 TECCA 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 TECCA 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 TECCA are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the rules for the school, and Caretakers are expected to cooperate with the school staff in helping students to maintain this conduct. Student codes of conduct are set forth in this Supplement. School students are also guaranteed due process of law as required by the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, Massachusetts General Law Chapter 71, Sections 37H, 37H1/2 and 37H3/4, and 603 CMR 53.00. At all times, the school administrator may exercise discretion and judgment when considering disposition of discipline to students.

### Discipline Measures

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

Each level has associated conduct breach definitions and corresponding disciplinary actions that may occur. Depending on the seriousness of the offense, discipline may not always take the above listed progression. School administration retains the right to skip steps in the progression. The issuance of a Warning and/or the holding of a Teacher/Administrator

Conference is documented in writing, becomes part of the student's internal record, but is NOT reported to outside educational agencies. Warnings are issued when a student demonstrates a breach of expected conduct, but not as serious as those listed under the detention, suspension, and/or expulsion categories in this Supplement.

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

**Detention:** Should a student continue to exhibit the same behavior(s) that resulted in a warning, the student may be assigned a detention This is a serious consequence in which the student is required to log in to a Teacher's or Administrator's LiveLesson Room for a designated period of time.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Furthermore, if a student is charged with a felony or poses a serious threat to the school community, TECCA will take immediate action to comply with Massachusetts law regarding suspension and/or expulsion of such student. Suspensions or expulsions for children identified as special education or eligible under Section 504 follow all appropriate state and federal policies, regulations, and laws. Violations that may lead to disciplinary action include, but are not limited to, the following breaches of conduct:

- **Missed Meeting Obligation:** Any occasion where a student does not attend an assigned meeting; appointment; detention; Saturday School; regularly scheduled homeroom check-in; in-school suspension
- **Cheating on tests or daily work:** A student who knowingly participates in copying, using another's work, and representing it as his or her own (for example, students
- Transmitting their work electronically for another student's use), or who provides other students with test answers, answer keys, or otherwise uses unauthorized materials in an assignment or assessment situation.
- **Plagiarism:** A student's use of another person's words, products, or ideas without proper acknowledgement of the original work with the intention of passing it off as his or her own. Plagiarism may occur deliberately (with the intention to deceive) or accidentally (due to poor referencing). It includes copying material from a book, copying-and-pasting information from the Internet, and getting family or friends to help with coursework.
- **Unexcused absence:** An unexcused absence is the absence of a student due to truancy, illegal employment or parental neglect.
- **Illegal absence:** Illegal absences are unexcused absences by a student who is under the age of 18 who are absent from school due to avoidable absences, parental neglect, illegal employment, unapproved family vacations, and truancy.
- **Abusive conduct:** A student who uses abusive language or engages in abusive conduct in the presence of others either in person or electronically/virtually.
- **Bullying:** Please see the definition in the Handbook.
- **Harassment:** Please see the definition earlier in the Handbook.
- **Vandalism:** A Student who intentionally damages or destroys school property or records (physical or electronic). In these instances, the school reserves the right to contact the proper law enforcement agencies.
- **Theft and robbery:** A student who takes money or other property (physical or electronic) with the intent to deprive another person or the school of that property. The threat or the use of force or violence is considered a serious breach of conduct. In these instances, the school reserves the right to contact the proper law enforcement agency.
- **Sexual harassment:** A student who subjects another to any unwelcome sexual advances including verbal harassment, unwelcome or inappropriate touching, or suggestions, requests, or demands for sexual favors.
- **Violation of acceptable use policy:** Students who violate the acceptable use policy in one form or another are open to disciplinary action including suspension. This would include signing on as Caretakers.
- **Disruption of the Schoolhouse:** As TECCA maintains a top priority of ensuring a safe learning environment for all students, any student who acts in such a manner as to cause other students' learning to be negatively affected may be found to be a disruption to the schoolhouse and thus may be subject to discipline. This could involve inappropriate behavior, language, posts/behavior in a LiveLesson session and/or breakout room, discussion posts with a teacher, or other acts deemed and referred to a school administrator.

- **Skipping School:** Although TECCA offers our families and students a flexible schooling experience, there are some activities and events that are considered to be “mandatory,” where attendance and participation are required. Such events include participation on the MCAS assessment and the expectation that students regularly attend all mutually agreed upon scheduled appointments. Students who do not participate in the MCAS assessment or those who do not regularly attend their scheduled appointments will be considered as “skipping school,” and will be subject to disciplinary procedures.

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

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

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

### **Connections Academy Honor Code 6-8**

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

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

Connections Academy Honor Code

I agree that I will ...

- Read (or have read to me) the contents of both the Student Handbook: General Portion and my school’s Handbook Supplement
- Value learning
- 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 (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:
  - 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.
6. Identify the disciplinary offense, the date on which the hearing took place, and the participants at the hearing;

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, TECCA will take immediate action to comply with Massachusetts law regarding expulsion of such student. Expulsions for students with disabilities or eligible under Section 504 follow all appropriate state and federal policies, regulations, and laws. In the event that a student is expelled, an educational service plan will be created to ensure the student is afforded an opportunity to make academic progress. TECCA 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 or witnesses and through written evidence) and cross-examine witnesses presented by the school.;
- d. the date, time, and location of the hearing;
- e. the right of the student and student's parent/guardian to interpreter services at the hearing if needed to participate;

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

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

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**

TECCA 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.

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

The following definitions are intended to provide guidance in assessing whether a particular behavior is a prohibited behavior. They are not exhaustive in their scope and are not intended to

replace the intuition of the individual. When in doubt as to whether or not a particular suspected behavior is a prohibited behavior, you are urged to rule on the side of caution and report your concerns to the appropriate authority, as provided for in this policy.

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

**Harassment:** any intentional behavior or course of conduct (whether written, verbal, graphic, or physical) directed at a specific person or group of persons that causes substantial physical and/or emotional distress or harm and is sufficiently severe, persistent, and/or pervasive that it creates an intimidating, threatening, and/or abusive educational environment for the other person(s) and serves no legitimate purpose.

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

**Cyber-bullying:** bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but shall not be limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo electronic or photo optical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communications. Cyber-bullying shall also include (i) the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or (ii) the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying. Cyber-bullying shall also include the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons, if the distribution or posting creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying.

**Hazing:** any conduct or method of initiation into any student organization, whether on public or private property, which willfully or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any student or other person. Such conduct shall include whipping, beating, branding, forced calisthenics, exposure to the weather, forced consumption of any food, liquor, beverage, drug or other substance, or any other brutal treatment or forced physical activity which is likely to

adversely affect the physical health or safety of any such student or other person, or which subjects such student or other person to extreme mental stress, including extended deprivation of sleep or rest or extended isolation. Hazing – M.G.L C. 269 S. 17, 18, & 19 Section 17

Whoever is a principal organizer or 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 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.

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

### **Section 18**

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

### **Section 19**

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

Each such group, team or organization shall distribute a copy of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen to each of its members, plebes, pledges or applicants for membership. It shall be the duty of each such group, Team or organization, acting through its designated officer,

to deliver annually, to the institution an attested acknowledgement stating that such group, Team or organization has received a copy of this section and said sections seventeen and eighteen, that each of its members, plebes, pledges, or applicants has received a copy of sections seventeen and eighteen, and that such group, Team or organization understands and agrees to comply with the provisions of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen. Each institution of secondary education and each public or private institution of post- secondary education shall, at least annually, before or at the start of enrollment, deliver to each person who enrolls as a full time student in such institution a copy of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen.

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

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

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

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

**Connexus Communication:** Students are expected to communicate respectfully using Webmail, in the LiveLesson Room (and Chat Pods) and in all school-related communications. The school Administration (and School Board, if applicable) will not tolerate any gestures, comments, threats, or actions which (i) cause, threaten to cause, or, an objective and reasoned third-party would find was intended to cause, bodily harm or personal degradation, or (ii) creates, or an objective and reasoned third-party would determine was intended to create, an intimidating, threatening, or abusive environment for any student, staff member, member of the administration, parent or guardian, or other third-party.

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

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

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

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

All complaints about prohibited behavior shall be kept confidential and be promptly investigated. Investigations will be completed no later than thirty (30) work days from the date of complaint or report, unless impracticable. The investigation will include a private interview with the person filing the complaint and with witnesses. The investigation will also include an interview with the person alleged to have committed the prohibited conduct. Each party will

have the opportunity to provide evidence and witnesses. During the pendency of the investigation, the principal will put into place interim safety measures to ensure the safety of the alleged victim.

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

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

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

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

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

For all other prohibited conduct, when the prohibited conduct is substantiated or when appropriate, the target(s) of the prohibited behavior (and/or such target(s) Caretaker(s)) shall be notified of the findings of the investigation, and what action has been taken. The school principal or designee will also inform the parents or guardians of the victim about the department's problem resolution system and the process for seeking assistance or filing a claim

through the problem resolution system. In providing such notification care shall be taken to respect the statutory privacy rights of the accused perpetrator of such harassment, intimidation, bullying, and/or dating violence. If disciplinary consequences are imposed against such student, a description of such discipline shall be included in the notification.

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

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

### **Complaints**

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

Students and/or their Caretakers may make informal complaints of conduct that they consider to be prohibited behavior(s) by verbal report to a teacher, school administrator, or other school personnel. Such informal complaints shall be reasonably specific including the person(s) involved, number of times and places of the alleged conduct, the target of suspected prohibited behavior, and the names of any potential student or staff witnesses. A school staff member or administrator who received an informal complaint shall promptly document the complaint in writing by completing the Report of Bullying, Aggressive, or Other Prohibited Behavior Form, found in the Forms section of the Virtual Library. This written report shall be promptly forwarded by the school staff member and/or administrator to the building principal for review, investigation, and appropriate action.

In addition to the remedies at TECCA, an individual may file a formal complaint

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

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Program Quality Assurance  
Services

75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148-4906

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

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

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

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

Phone: (617) 289-0111

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

### **Privacy and Confidentiality**

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

### **Caretaker Responsibility and Non Compliance**

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

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

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

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

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

### **Bystanders**

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

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

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

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

- Ask for help from a trusted adult such as a teacher, principal, or other school official
- Help the person being targeted
- Create a distraction to focus attention on something else
- Try helping the person who is being targeted leave the scene by telling him/her that you need them to play a game or that an adult needs to see them
- Don't give prohibited behavior an audience as aggressors are often encouraged by the attention they receive, so don't support them by watching
- Set an example
- Do not target others
- Do not encourage prohibited conduct
- Create posters against prohibited conduct
- Join an anti-bullying club
- Tell an aggressor that 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.

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

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

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

## **TITLE IX - THE FINAL RULE**

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

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

### **Definitions**

#### **Actual Knowledge**

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

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

#### **Complainant**

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

#### **Formal Complaint**

A document filed by the complainant or signed by the Title IX Coordinator alleging sexual harassment against a respondent and requesting an investigation of the alleged sexual

harassment. A complainant must be an active student participating or attempting to participate in the education program provided by TECCA.

### **Respondent**

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

### **Sexual Harassment**

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

An employee of TECCA conditioning the provision of an aid, benefit, or service of the school on an individual's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct (quid pro quo).

Unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive, and offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to the TECCA education program or sanctioned activity.

Sexual assault as defined by 20 USC 1092(f)(6)(A)(v), dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking as defined by 34 USC 12291(a)(10), (8), (30).

### **Supportive Measures**

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

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

Supportive measures may include:

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

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

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

### **Title IX Coordinator**

The employee designated by TECCA to coordinate its efforts to comply with Title IX responsibilities will be referred to as the Title IX Coordinator. In addition to students and current

employees, the Title IX Coordinator's contact information must be provided to prospective employees, parents or legal guardians, and all unions (if applicable).

The name or title, office address, e-mail address, and telephone number of the Title IX Coordinator shall be prominently posted on the school's website. Any person, including a student's parent or guardian, may report sex discrimination and sexual harassment to the Title IX Coordinator in person, by mail, by telephone, or by email at any time, including non-business hours.

### **Formal Complaint**

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

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

### **Initial Response**

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

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

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

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

## **Required Grievance Procedures**

### **Formal Complaints**

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

All parties will be treated equitably through the remediation process. Remedies under the Final Rule

are designed to restore or preserve equal access to TECCA's education program and sanctioned events and activities.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Include the procedures and permissible bases for the complainant and respondent to appeal.

List the range of supportive measures available to complainants and respondents.

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

If a formal complaint is made, written notice will be provided to all known parties. Included

within the notice are the grievance process and the informal resolution process. Any details

known at the time of report of sexual harassment may include the identities of the parties

involved (if known), the conduct allegedly constituting sexual harassment, and the date and

location of the alleged incident (if known). The notice will include a statement acknowledging

the respondent is presumed not responsible until the conclusion of the grievance process. The

parties may have an advisor who may inspect and review evidence. Such an advisor may be an

attorney, though the presence of an attorney is not required. All parties will be afforded enough

time to prepare. Finally, the notice will include that knowingly making false statements is

against the student and employee code of conduct.

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

### **Dismissal**

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

If the conduct did not occur while participating in the school's education program or sanctioned events or activities or did not occur in the United States, the complaint will be dismissed.

However, the school may pursue action under the Code of Conduct Policy.

The school may dismiss the formal complaint if:

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

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

### **Consolidation of Formal Complaints**

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

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

## **Investigation**

Under the Final Rule, the burden of proof and the burden of gathering evidence to make a determination as to responsibility of alleged sexual harassment falls to TECCA. Voluntary written consent must be obtained to use a party's physician, psychiatrist, psychologist or other professional treatment records. An equal opportunity to present witnesses and evidence will be provided to all parties. The ability of either party to discuss the allegations investigated or gathered and present evidence may not be restricted.

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

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

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

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

## **Hearings**

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

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

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

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

### **Determination**

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

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

- A description of the allegation that meets the definition of sexual harassment
- A full description of the procedural steps from receipt of the complaint through final determination (notices, interviews, site visits, evidence gathering methods, and hearings)
- Findings of fact supporting the final determination
- Conclusions as to the application of the school's code of conduct and the known facts
- A statement and rationale for:
  - Each allegation and determination of responsibility
  - Disciplinary sanctions imposed on the respondent, if any
  - If remedies designed to restore or preserve equal access to TECCA's education program and/or sanctioned activities will be provided by the school to the complainant; any such remedies will be implemented by the Title IX Coordinator
- The school's allowable reasons and procedures for appeal (see Appeals section below)

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

### **Appeals**

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

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

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

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

## **Informal Resolution**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Retaliation**

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

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

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

Speech protected by the First Amendment does not constitute retaliation.

The identity of parties and witnesses shall remain confidential except as permitted by FERPA. Any party that makes a false statement in bad faith may be charged with a code of conduct violation.

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

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

The curriculum, instructional materials, and outcomes used in this program shall be recommended by the Superintendent and approved by the TECCA Board. The overarching goal of these programs shall be to develop in each student the ability to make intelligent, healthy, fact-based choices about drugs, alcohol or tobacco, and to develop the courage to stand by 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 TECCA Board prohibits the use or consumption by students of alcohol, tobacco products, or drugs on school property or at any school function. Additionally, any student who is under the influence of drugs or alcoholic beverages prior to, or during, attendance at or participation in a school-sponsored activity, will be barred from that activity and may be subject to disciplinary action.

This policy shall be posted on the district's website and notice shall be provided to all students and parents of this policy in accordance with state law. Additionally, the district shall file a copy of this policy with DESE in accordance with law in a manner requested by DESE.

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

