



Enrollment Policy, Procedure and Application

Submitted by the TECCA Board of Trustees
to Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Introduction

TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School (TECCA) is a public school of choice, whose enrollment policies and procedures are consistent with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Virtual School regulations (603 CMR 52.00). TECCA is open to students in grades K-12 from across Massachusetts who need a learning community that is accessible and flexible.

TECCA shall be open to all students, on a space available basis, and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, creed or religion, sex, gender identity¹, ethnicity, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, age, ancestry, athletic performance, and special need, proficiency in the English language or a foreign language, or prior academic achievement.

As a pioneer of online personalized learning, we empower our educators to tailor learning experiences to each student's strengths, interests, and challenges. We redefine and change how students and teachers engage through innovative technology, while ensuring mastery of competencies embedded in a rigorous curriculum. Helping families develop a clear picture of the unique scheduling and workload realities of the online learning model, including the need for self-motivation, is particularly critical.

As a tuition free public school of choice, TECCA does not charge an application fee for admission or use financial or technological incentives to recruit students. The following policies and procedures have been created and developed by TECCA Administration and Board of Trustees.

¹ Footnote - For purposes of 603 CMR 52.05, gender identity shall mean a person's gender-related identity, appearance or behavior, whether or not that gender-related identity, appearance or behavior is different from that traditionally associated with the person's physiology or assigned sex at birth. Gender-related identity may be shown by providing evidence including, but not limited to, medical history, care or treatment of the gender-related identity, consistent and uniform assertion of the gender-related identity, or any other evidence that the gender-related identity is sincerely held as part of a person's core identity; provided, however, that gender-related identity shall not be asserted for any improper purpose.

General Policy Statements

McKinney-Vento Statement

A student who meets the definitions of McKinney-Vento as being homeless will not be prevented from enrolling. The McKinney Vento statement is as follows:

TECCA will abide by all applicable federal, state, and local statutes, policies, and guidelines for student enrollment. Enrollment eligibility for homeless applicants will not be affected by inability to submit enrollment documents. These policies and guidelines include compliance with the McKinney-Vento Act regarding homeless students. The school leader or his/her designee shall serve as the liaison for homeless students. Students who meet the definition of homeless shall not be barred from enrolling due the inability to provide required residency documents.

Grade Placement

Placement in applicable grades requires a student to have successfully completed the preceding grade to which an enrollment offer is made. Academic documentation will be requested and reviewed to ensure accurate grade level assignment and course placement for each student. If it is found that the student did not complete the grade level previous to the grade level offered, the guidance team may change the student's placement to the appropriate grade level. Examples of acceptable documentation include up-to-date report cards, homeschool plans approved by the home district, affidavit of completion from the school leader or principal. Additionally, Grades 10-12 must provide a full transcript (can be unofficial) in order to transfer credit.

Dual Enrollment of a Full-time Student

A student shall not be allowed to enroll in TECCA while enrolled as a full-time student in another public or private K-12 school. This statement must be acknowledged by parents/legal guardians prior to final confirmation.

Social Security Number

TECCA does not request or collect a student's or legal guardian's social security number as part of the application process.

Interviews, Information Meetings, and Tests

The school will not administer tests to applicants or predicate enrollment on result from any test of ability or achievement. Potential students and their families are not required to attend interviews or informational meetings as a condition of enrollment. However, families are encouraged to attend an open house or informational meeting with TECCA staff to learn more about the school.

DESE Regulatory Requirements

The CMVS statute (G. L. c. 71, § 94(t)) states "A school committee may, by vote, restrict enrollment of its students in commonwealth virtual schools if the total enrollment of its students in commonwealth virtual schools exceeds 1 percent of the total enrollment in its district; provided, however, that no student enrolled in a commonwealth virtual school shall be compelled to withdraw as a result of that vote." To comply with this law, TECCA will track enrollment trends to inform the school's enrollment processes. TECCA must continue to accept applications from students who reside in these districts. However, TECCA must skip over

students living in districts that have voted to impose enrollment caps when they are selected during an admission lottery and place such students on its waitlist in the order in which they are selected. TECCA cannot skip over a student if their district of residence has not voted to restrict enrollment. As a space becomes available, TECCA shall offer the seat to the next available student on the waitlist, pending cap restrictions and in accordance with preferences for admission. Additionally, TECCA must communicate accurate information to families regarding the enrollment caps for specific districts. TECCA must explain admission practices clearly and, where applicable, the constraints related to districts with enrollment caps. TECCA must inform families if they will be “skipping over” applicants from districts that voted to restrict enrollment and that the school will be placing such applicants on a waitlist. Annually, TECCA will post a list of districts that voted to restrict enrollment for the subsequent school year on the enrollment section of TECCA’s website. This section of the website will clearly indicate to families the enrollment limitations from specific districts and state why the limitations are in place.

Eligibility Criteria for Enrollment

Residency

To be eligible to apply, enroll, and attend TECCA, an applicant must be an actual resident of Massachusetts². To verify residency, a copy of one of the following documents (dated within the last 3 months) must be provided. The document must list the parent or guardian’s name and the residential address:

1. Utility bill - electric, water, sewage, cable/internet or heat (gas, oil, propane)
2. Car insurance statement, Massachusetts car registration, or bank or credit card statement
3. Mortgage statement, signed annual lease agreement, or rent receipt
4. Property tax statement
5. Letter from government agency, including but not limited to:

Departments of Revenue (DOR), Children and Family Services (DCF), Transitional Assistance (DTA), Youth Services (DYS), Social Security, any communications on Commonwealth of Massachusetts Letterhead.

TECCA will work with applicants who are experiencing homelessness in accordance with the McKinney-Vento Act (see General Policy Statements section on page 2.)

Proof of Age/Custody

For students entering TECCA in either Kindergarten or grade 1, a copy of the student’s birth certificate or other government-issued ID with verified date of birth is required. Court mandated documentation will be required if applicable.

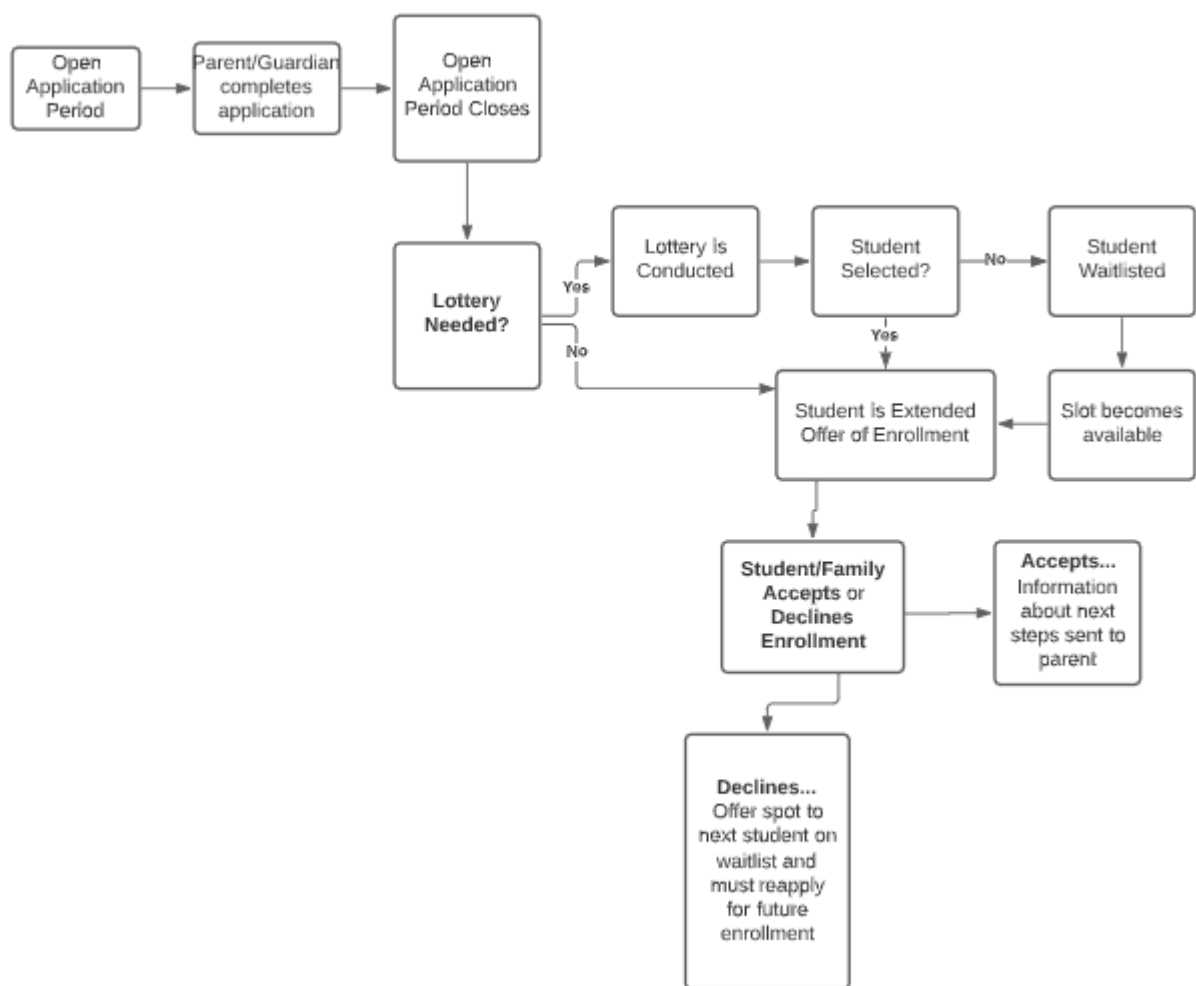
² An applicant must "actually reside" in the city or town indicated on their application. "Actual residence" may be determined by looking at physical presence in the city or town with an intent to remain in the city or town and make it the applicant's home, "the center of [the applicant's] domestic, social and civil life."

Maximum Age and Thresholds

While Kindergarten is not compulsory in Massachusetts, to enroll in Kindergarten with TECCA, the student must be five years old as of September 1 of the year of enrollment. Each child must attend school beginning no later than September of the calendar year in which the child turns six. In order to enroll in grade 1 with TECCA, students must turn six no later than September of the calendar year. Students who have not yet earned a high school diploma and have not yet turned 22 may enroll with TECCA.

Enrollment Process Overview

The following diagram provides an overview of the TECCA enrollment process:



Each spring, TECCA opens the application process for the following school year. An enrollment application is available to any potential applicant on the school website. Potential applicants must complete and submit an enrollment application before the application deadline (all deadlines posted on www.connectionsacademy.com/massachusetts-virtual-school/enrollment) in order to be considered for enrollment.

When the application period closes, TECCA will determine the number of open spots based on overall school enrollment. If there are more eligible applicants than available spaces, a random number lottery will be conducted, prioritizing students who have enrollment preference. Lottery results will be published on the TECCA website and families selected for admission via the lottery will be notified via email.

Selected families will have a period of time to accept or decline an offer of enrollment. Any families not selected will be put on the wait list in the order determined by the random lottery number assigned, while also taking preferences for admission into consideration. If spots become available throughout the year, families will be offered placement based on the assigned lottery number.

Enrollment Preferences

TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School will provide an enrollment preference to:

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

Grade Level Caps

Students will be enrolled based on the annually set enrollment limits. The school's determination of the number of spaces available per grade level each year is based on factors such as graduation, student transfers and withdrawals.

Enrollment Process Details:

Initial Application

Public notice of all application deadlines will be publicized at least one month in advance on the TECCA website. The principal application deadline will be set no earlier than January 1st for the upcoming school year.

During the open application period, the parent or legal guardian completes the online application on the TECCA website. To be eligible for an enrollment preference, proof will be required at the time an application is submitted. If a lottery is required, students will be included without a preference if they fail to provide proof prior to the application deadline.

The enrollment application requires the signature of only one parent/guardian, unless otherwise determined by court order. Once an application is submitted, an email will let the family know that submission was successful.

If the school does not receive more applications than there are spaces available, then a lottery will not be conducted. Students who applied by the application deadline and provide proof of residency will receive an offer of admission. A subsequent enrollment period will take place until all spaces are filled.

If there are more applicants than spots available, a lottery will be conducted. Enrollment applications submitted after the application deadline for the first enrollment period will not be included in the first lottery. If a subsequent enrollment period is scheduled, late applications for the first enrollment period will be included in the subsequent lottery.

TECCA will not admit students in excess of the school's approved maximum enrollment of 2,700 students.

Lottery/Wait List

If an enrollment lottery needs to be held, the date and location for the enrollment lottery is publicized at least one week in advance. Attendance is not required for enrollment. The lottery logistics are as follows:

1. TECCA determines the number of available spaces in each grade level prior to the enrollment lottery, based on the school's capacity and the estimated number of returning students.
2. The lottery is conducted by the TECCA excel platform which creates a list where an initial random rank order is created and assigned to each applying student.
3. Applicants will be granted admission to TECCA in the order set by the random rank order and after preferences for admission are applied until the available spaces are filled. Students who gain admission through the lottery will be notified by email within a week after the enrollment lottery was conducted.
4. Once the available spaces are filled, the remaining applicants are placed on the waiting list in the randomly ranked order, taking into consideration preference for admission. The waiting list is not static and is subject to change based on the changes to preferences that may occur over time for certain applicants. It is the responsibility of the family to notify the school with the most up to date relevant information, contact info, preference info, etc.
5. The school's electronic registration system will maintain accurate records of the wait listed students including first, middle and last name; date of birth; home address; telephone number and grade level.
6. As spaces become available during the school year, the next available student on the waiting list will be offered admission. Any student granted an enrollment preference will be required to provide updated proof at the time an offer is made. The offer of admission will be rescinded if they fail to provide proof. No student will be admitted ahead of any other eligible student on the waiting list, except in cases where enrollment preferences change.
7. TECCA may repeat the enrollment process to fill newly opened spots. In such cases, the above procedures, including public notification of deadlines, will be followed.

8. Wait list status does not carry over from year to year. All students on the current school year's wait list must reapply to be eligible for the next school year.

Notification/Enrollment/Registration

Within a week after the enrollment lottery, students who gain admission through the lottery process will be notified by email. Admitted students/families must accept or decline an offer of admission within a certain amount of time, dependent upon when the offer of admission is made.

Offers made from the initial enrollment lottery up until end of June have 10 days to accept or decline the offer of admission; offers made from the first day of July until the first day of school have 5 days to accept or decline the offer of admissions; while offers made during the school year have 3 days to accept or decline an offer of admission.

1. Families will accept placement through the TECCA registration system. At this time, families will provide more detailed demographic information and families will be able to upload required documents.
2. To decline an offer of placement families will submit written communications to indicate they are no longer interested.
3. The day after the deadline, any unaccepted offers will be voided and offered to the next student on the waiting list. In this case, the family has forfeited the spot on the wait list and will need to reapply in order to be considered for future enrollment.
4. A student who has received a placement offer must begin to attend school within ten school days of their anticipated start date, e.g., the first day of the school year. In accordance with TECCA's attendance policies, if a student does not attend within 10 school days of the anticipated start date, TECCA will attempt to reach the family to ascertain the reason behind not attending. After ten days, with no information from the family, the student will be considered withdrawn and must re-apply if they wish to be considered again for enrollment.

Post Enrollment

Engagement

TECCA will engage parents as soon as students start to ensure that responsibilities of students and families working in the online environment are understood. Students and families are offered a chance to participate in orientation and onboarding activities to support their successful transition to an online learning environment and TECCA. While students are not required to attend orientation, it is highly encouraged. Through the TECCA learning management system, teachers, students, parents or Learning Coaches will engage in ongoing monitoring of the student's learning and achievement.

Learning Coach

Each class has a teacher, but each student needs a learning coach that is with them during the day. This is usually a parent; however, the parent or legal guardian can indicate another trusted adult during registration. The Learning Coach is encouraged to attend orientation in order to learn more about what you can expect of us and what we expect of you.

Orientation

Following enrollment, the family is presented with both a Learning Coach and Student orientation which includes videos that review what a student can expect on their first day of school. Orientations are not required but highly encouraged to attend so students and families can become familiar with the virtual school platform. Also, details about their daily routines and live lessons, a checklist detailing how to be successful in a virtual environment and other information about the school will be provided.

Access to Materials and Technology

TECCA shall ensure that all enrolled students have access to necessary technology and materials to participate in our educational program and shall provide such technology and materials free of charge to students as required by state law. [603 CMR 52:05 (15)] Any other needed materials are automatically sent to the family as needed per grade level.

Student Recruitment Plan

TECCA has a recruitment plan that will ensure that it conducts outreach to all Massachusetts families and students who may benefit from the TECCA learning model. The TECCA enrollment team provides a welcoming and supportive environment for those who are interested in online learning. TECCA will educate families about the school and provide a complete array of information, including its curriculum, teaching methods, technology, and testing requirements.

TECCA conducts outreach through the following methods:

Website: The school has created and will maintain a website, www.connectionsacademy.com/massachusetts-virtual-school. The website contains information about TECCA, its approach, its curriculum, as well as FAQs and their answers. The site includes enrollment information and procedures, a detailed lottery description, virtual information session schedules, and other useful tools for prospective students and their families.

Information Sessions: Information sessions are offered virtually and families may attend the session from home via their computers. There is also a pre-recorded video that can be viewed at any time for those who may have schedule conflicts.

Telephone/email Information Service: TECCA maintains a telephone information line and an email information service to answer the questions of parents and legal guardians.

Search Engines and Social Media: TECCA is linked to leading internet search engines with local reference capability to help Massachusetts families looking for virtual school options. In addition, TECCA benefits from Facebook, Twitter, and other social media outreach conducted by parent advocates.

Partnerships with Educational and Family Support Agencies: As part of its outreach process, TECCA will provide information about the school to the community that may include: youth-serving organizations such as Boys and Girls Clubs, parent groups, health related organizations, and organizations for young actors, dancers and athletes.

Media Outreach: TECCA will make use of paid media, primarily advertisements in local newspapers, television, and radio service announcements.

Specific Outreach: TECCA will develop specific advertising for guidance counselors and families. The school is in the process of instituting specific outreach targeting those student situations. Finally, the school will periodically staff booths and tables at events designed to attract a broad range of students.

Direct Mail: TECCA conducts direct mail campaigns announcing the school to families with students throughout Massachusetts. In a typical mailing, a postcard will be sent out inviting parents to attend an Informational Session, visit the website, and/or contact the enrollment team directly. TECCA uses electronic mail to supplement or replace its physical mail campaign.

Collection and Release of Student Information by TECCA (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education.

FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's education records. These rights transfer to the student when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. Students to whom the rights have transferred are "eligible students."

- Parents or eligible students have the right to inspect and review the student's education records maintained by the school. Schools are not required to provide copies of records unless, for reasons such as great distance, it is impossible for parents or eligible students to review the records. Schools may charge a fee for copies.
- Parents or eligible students have the right to request that a school correct records which they believe to be inaccurate or misleading. If the school decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student then has the right to a formal hearing. After the hearing, if the school still decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student has the right to place a statement with the record setting forth his or her view about the contested information.
- Generally, schools must have written permission from the parent or eligible student in order to release any information from a student's education record. However, FERPA allows schools to disclose those records, without consent, to the following parties or under the following conditions (34 CFR § 99.31):
 - School officials with legitimate educational interest
 - Other schools to which a student is transferring
 - Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes
 - Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student
 - Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school
 - Accrediting organizations
 - To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena
 - Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies; and
 - State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific State law

For additional information, you may call 1-800-382-6010.