

# TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School District Targeted and Focused Monitoring Report

**Review Dates:** **December 11-12, 2024**

**Date of Final Report:** **01/16/2025**



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Acting Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

During the 2024-2025 school year, TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School District participated in a Targeted and Focused Monitoring Review conducted by the Department’s Office of Language Acquisition (OLA). The purpose of the Targeted and Focused Monitoring Review is to monitor compliance with regulatory requirements focusing on English Learner Education.

District/charter schools are reviewed every six years through Targeted and Focused Monitoring. There are 12 ELE criteria that target implementation of the requirements related to ELE programs under state and federal law and regulations:

ELE 1: Annual English Language Proficiency Assessment

ELE 2: State Accountability Assessment

ELE 3: Initial Identification of ELs and FELs

ELE 5: ELE Program and Services

ELE 6: Program Exit and Readiness

ELE 7: Parent Involvement

ELE 8: Declining Entry to a Program

ELE 10: Parental Notification

ELE 13: Fallow-up Support

ELE 14: Licensure Requirements

ELE 15: Professional Development Requirements

ELE 18: Records of ELs

The monitoring process differs depending on the thorough data analysis the Department conducts.

The review process includes the following:

1. Self-Assessment

* District reviews English Learner Education documentation for required elements including document uploads.
* District reviews a sample of English learner (EL) student records selected across grade levels and EL focus areas such as opt-out students, former ELs and students and/or parents who need translation and/or interpretation.
* Upon completion of these two internal reviews, the district’s self-assessment is submitted to the Department for review.

1. Verification

* Review of EL student records: The Department may select a sample of student records and request certain documentation to be uploaded to the WBMS as evidence of implementation of the ELE criteria.
* Review of additional documents for English Learner Education
* Surveys of parents of ELs: Parents of ELs are sent a survey that solicits information regarding their experiences with the district’s implementation of English Learner Education program(s), related services, and procedural requirements.
* Interviews of staff
* Classroom observations as applicable
* Parent and student focus groups as applicable

**Report:**

Within approximately 20 business days of the onsite visit, the onsite chairperson will forward to the superintendent or charter school leader the findings from the Targeted and Focused Monitoring Review. Within 10 business days of receipt of the findings, the district reviews and comments on the findings for factual accuracy before they are finalized. After the report is finalized, districts develop a Continuous Improvement and Monitoring Plan (CIMP) for any criteria receiving a rating of "Partially Implemented," "Not Implemented," and “Implementation in Progress.” The CIMP outlines an action plan, identifies the success metric, describes the measurement mechanism and provides a completion timeframe to bring those areas into compliance with the controlling statute or regulation. District and charter schools are expected to incorporate the CIMP actions into their district and school improvement plans, including their professional development plans.

## DEFINITION OF COMPLIANCE RATINGS

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| **Implemented** | The requirement is substantially met in all important aspects. |
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| **Implementation in Progress** | This rating is used for criteria containing new or updated legal requirements and means that the district has implemented any old requirements contained in the criterion and is training staff or beginning to implement the new requirements in such a way that the onsite team anticipates that the new requirements will be implemented by the end of the school year. |
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| **Partially Implemented** | The requirement, in one or several important aspects, is not entirely met. |
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| **Not Implemented** | The requirement is totally or substantially not met. |
| **Not Applicable** | The requirement does not apply to the school district or charter school. |

For more information on the Targeted and Focused Monitoring approach, please visit the Department’s [website](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/cpr/default.html).

TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School District

## SUMMARY OF COMPLIANCE CRITERIA RATINGS

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|  | **English Learner Education Requirements** |
| **IMPLEMENTED** | ELE 15 |
| **PARTIALLY**  **IMPLEMENTED** | ELE 1, ELE 2, ELE 3, ELE 5, ELE 6, ELE 7, ELE 8, ELE 10, ELE 13, ELE 14, ELE 18 |

| **Improvement Area** **1** |
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| **Criterion:** ELE 1 - Annual English Language Proficiency Assessment |
| **Rating:** Partially Implemented |
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| **Description of Current Issue:** A review of ACCESS participation rates as shown in the state database revealed that the district did only assess the English proficiency of 76% of the English learners in the district. |

| **Improvement Area 2** |
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| **Criterion:** ELE 2 - State Accountability Assessment |
| **Rating:** Partially Implemented |
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| **Description of Current Issue:** MCAS participation rates as shown in the state database indicates that only 82% of the ELLs in the district participated in the MCAS Science and Technology/Engineering test, only 59% of the ELLs participated in the MCAS English Language Arts test, and only 79% of ELLs participated in MCAS Math test. |

| **Improvement Area 3** |
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| **Criterion:** ELE 3 - Initial Identification of ELs and FELs |
| **Rating:** Partially Implemented |
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| **Description of Current Issue:** A review of submitted documentation and staff interviews indicated that while the district does administer the HLS to all enrolling students and has initial identification procedures in place, the written initial identification procedures do not include all required components. Additionally, staff interviews indicated that students who enroll in the district are not screened in accordance with guidance timelines, which delays these students' placement into the ELE program and services to receive the supports they are entitled to. Therefore, the Department concludes that the district does not properly identify students who need English language support and the current initial identification procedures and practices are not in compliance with 603 CMR 14.02(1) that requires districts and charter schools to establish procedures in accordance with the Department guidelines. Additionally, staff interviews indicated that the district does not have formal SLIFE identification procedures and practices to meet the academic and linguistic needs of SLIFE students who enroll in the district. |

| **Improvement Area 4** |
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| **Criterion:** ELE 5 - Program Placement and Structure |
| **Rating:** Partially Implemented |
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| **Description of Current Issue:** The Department conducted a TFM review to evaluate the effectiveness of programs serving English learners as required by G.L. c. 71A,§7A. A review of data as a part of the evaluation of the district's ELE program indicated that English learners do not demonstrate sufficient growth in English language acquisition and the ELE program needs improvement to promote and support the rapid acquisition of English language proficiency by ELs.  Interviews and a review of documentation indicated that the district does not have an ESL curriculum aligned to WIDA 2020 ELD frameworks, which is integral to an effective ELE program in which ELs of all grades and proficiency levels become English proficient at a rapid pace. Reading and literacy programs and materials help students improve their literacy skills and can be used as resources; however, they cannot replace an ESL curriculum that is integral to an effective ELE program in which ELs of all grades and proficiency levels become English proficient at a rapid pace.  Documentation and staff interviews also indicated that the district has not adopted procedures to identify English learners who do not meet English proficiency benchmarks and has not established a process for the district to: (i) identify areas in which identified English learners needs improvement and establish personalized goals for the identified English learners to attain English proficiency; (ii) assess and track the progress of English learners in the identified areas of improvement; (iii) review resources and services available to identified English learners that may assist said learners in the identified areas of improvement; and (iv) incorporate input from the parents or legal guardian of the identified English learner as required under M.G.L. c. 71A, § 11.  The review also found that some English Learners do not have equitable access to some services and supports available in the district. Equitable access issues identified during the review are as follows: EL students who are identified as having a disability do not always receive special education and related services in addition to their ELE services.  Staff interviews also indicated that content teachers do not always use sheltered content instruction strategies that focus on meaningful and engaging activities designed to build content knowledge while strategically taking into account the language demands that ELs face in content classrooms, scaffolding appropriately to meet these demands, and delving into specifics about the language of the content by developing language objectives aligned to WIDA Standards 2020. Instead content staff rely on ESL staff to provide them with appropriate scaffolds and supports for their content teaching to be accessible to EL students.  Finally, interviews, documentation, and a review of student records indicated that the district lacks the ESL staffing capacity to effectively provide essential components of an effective ELE program, such as providing all identified EL students with ESL instruction that meets their linguistic needs, providing time for ESL collaboration with content teachers to identify language objectives, student needs and to provide appropriate supports and scaffolds for students in content courses, ensuring students are screened in a timely manner, and supporting for content staff during their instructional planning to ensure content staff are embedding and utilizing strategies to provide sheltered content instruction. |

| **Improvement Area 5** |
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| **Criterion:** ELE 6 - Program Exit and Readiness |
| **Rating:** Partially Implemented |
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| **Description of Current Issue:** A review of documentation submitted indicates that the district has two sets of exit criteria by which students may be reclassified. The district's reclassification procedures state that students may be exited from the program if the students score a 4.5 overall composite score or if they meet exit criteria. The district's current reclassification procedures are not in compliance with 603 CMR 14.02 that requires districts to establish exit criteria in accordance with the Department guidelines. |

| **Improvement Area 6** |
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| **Criterion:** ELE 7 - Parent Involvement |
| **Rating:** Partially Implemented |
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| **Description of Current Issue:** Interviews and documentation indicated that the district does not have an English Learner Parent Advisory Council as required in M.G.L. c. 71A,§ 6A.  Interviews indicated that although the district provides translated documents and interpretation for families who need them and has external service providers to provide this language assistance, staff instead rely on Google translate for most of their translation needs and some internal staff who are multilingual interpret and translate on their own communications. Similarly, at times, staff interviews indicated that friends or family members are providing interpretation. The district must have policies and procedures in place to ensure that competent, appropriately trained staff or outside resources provide translation and interpretation. Appropriate and competent translators or interpreters have proficiency in target languages, ease of written and oral expression, knowledge of specialized terms or concepts, expertise in the content being interpreted and as they are trained in their role they are knowledgeable on the ethics of interpreting and translating, and the need for confidentiality. Therefore, the Department has determined that the district does not always provide effective language assistance to parents whose preferred language is not English and therefore, does not always meet the obligation to communicate effectively with parents to include them in matters pertaining to their children's education. |

| **Improvement Area 7** |
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| **Criterion:** ELE 8 - Declining Entry to a Program |
| **Rating:** Partially Implemented |
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| **Description of Current Issue:** A review of the district documentation and staff interviews indicated that the written confirmation of the withdrawal (opt-out request) is not provided annually to the school by the parent or legal guardian and such confirmation is not retained in the student's cumulative folder as required by G.L. c. G.L. c. 71A§12. Student records and staff interviews also indicated that the district does not regularly monitor the progress of opt-out students which would indicate next steps if a student's academic and linguistic needs are not met. |

| **Improvement Area 8** |
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| **Criterion:** ELE 10 - Parental Notification |
| **Rating:** Partially Implemented |
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| **Description of Current Issue:** A review of the documentation indicated that the district does not have clear written procedures for parental notifications, including timeline, ensuring compliance with state and federal forms, and responsibilities for various stakeholder roles. |

| **Improvement Area 9** |
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| **Criterion:** ELE 13 - Follow-up Support |
| **Rating:** Partially Implemented |
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| **Description of Current Issue:** A review of documentation submitted and staff interviews indicated that there are no formal monitoring procedures and protocols in place to indicate whether language or academic deficits may exist for students who have been exited from the ELE program and provide support to those students, if needed. |

| **Improvement Area 10** |
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| **Criterion:** ELE 14 - Licensure Requirements |
| **Rating:** Partially Implemented |
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| **Description of Current Issue:** A review of the relevant SEI Endorsement data indicated that most core academic teachers assigned to provide sheltered English instruction to English learners hold the SEI Teacher Endorsement, but some do not. |

| **Improvement Area 11** |
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| **Criterion:** ELE 18 - Records of ELs |
| **Rating:** Partially Implemented |
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| **Description of Current Issue:** A review of the documents requested from the district indicated that the district does not consistently keep all the required documents in students' EL records. |