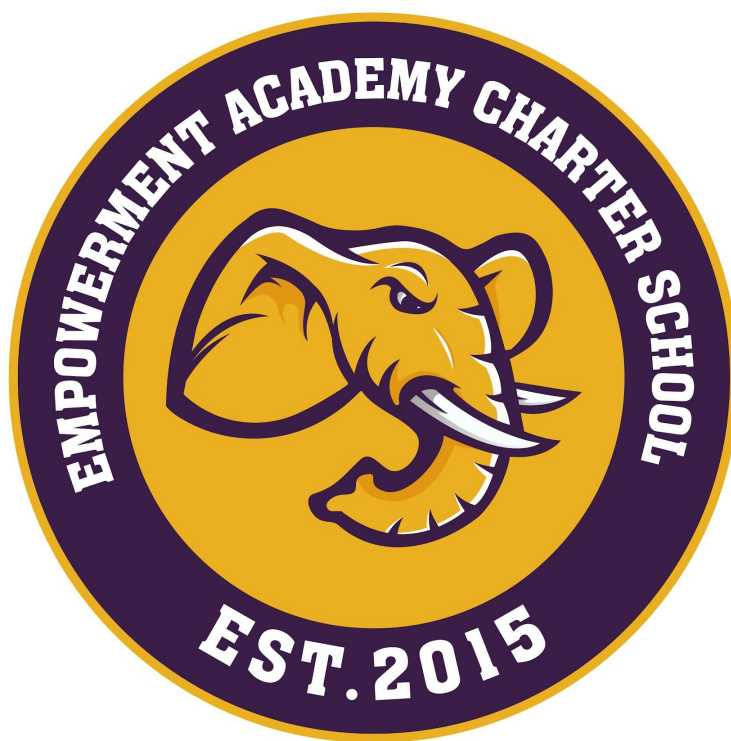


EMPOWERMENT ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL



**MIDDLE SCHOOL
FAMILY HANDBOOK
2025 - 2026**

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this handbook is to provide scholars and families with important information about Empowerment Academy as well as to ensure that this is a clear understanding of school procedures and expectations.

Empowerment Academy will review school values, in addition to, behavior and academic expectations with each scholar in September. These areas will be, repeatedly, reviewed throughout the school year. However, school orientations, one-on-one meetings, and “Coffee with the Principal” are examples of opportunities where parents and guardians will be able to ask teachers and/or leaders about these expectations and work together to develop a plan to assist scholars with meeting the expectations outlined in this handbook.

*We believe that it is important for parents and guardians to review school expectations with their young scholars **at home at the very beginning of the school year** as well as throughout. This will help them have a strong start to the beginning of the school year.*

Please acknowledge receipt of this handbook by signing and returning the last page

EMPOWERMENT ACADEMY'S MISSION & VISION

The founders of Empowerment Academy Charter School believe that an education which makes children feel loved, leads them to care about one another, want to develop their minds and potential to serve, contribute to their communities, and successfully teaches the high level skills and knowledge necessary to do so, will work to advance societal goals as diverse as individual happiness, social comity and national prosperity.

Hence, the mission of Empowerment Academy Charter School is to develop values, skills, knowledge, confidence. and character in its scholars that will propel them to success in school, college and their careers as well as to the fulfillment of a socially contributory life.

We envision that students who attend Empowerment Academy Charter School will feel cared about, will care about their peers, and will have a sense of belonging; will demonstrate that they value their common work of learning and will develop strong study habits from the earliest grades; will share dreams of wanting to build a better world and – by making continual progress toward mastery of all grade-level academic standards and growing in confidence and character – will give us hope that they will succeed; will achieve mastery of all high school academic standards, including a high-level understanding of math and science; and will graduate fully equipped for success in college, work and life, and wanting to serve and contribute to every community of which they are a member.

Fulfillment of the school's mission won't just benefit the school's students. It will also benefit the broader Jersey City community and the wider world, as the school's graduates, desiring and empowered to make a positive social contribution, will leave their marks.

Moreover, should our fusion of research-based, proven practices succeed at achieving their intended goals, we believe the Jersey City Public School District will benefit. None of the design elements of Empowerment Academy Charter School require unsustainable commitments on the part of its administrators or teachers. All are design elements that we believe could be adopted and scaled in public schools throughout the district. Thus, it is our hope that our school model will prove worthy of emulation and ultimately spur school improvements in public schools throughout Jersey City – and beyond.

STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

Empowerment Academy Charter School is characterized by a school climate that is orderly, supportive, and focused on academic success. We strive to ensure that our scholars feel they are cared for by the entire faculty and staff, and feel that their life within the school is meaningful. Ensuring that rules are fairly and consistently enforced, building a sense of community within the school, and actively engaging students in their learning reduces disruptions and problems. Students are to conduct themselves respectfully, and in accordance with our Core Values daily. It is always our mission to positively reinforce students and award good behavior. However, if students violate any of our school's core values, there will be developmentally appropriate consequences and action(s) taken. Please read the "Discipline" section of this handbook for further details.

A significant achievement gap exists in Jersey City. Our school will have different results than other Jersey City Public Schools. To get these different results, we need to do things differently.

Core Values

At *Empowerment Academy*, we will create a culture founded upon mutual respect and care that, its values internalized, will be empowering to our scholars. Our values and character education curriculum emphasizes five core values:

- Respect
- Caring
- Responsibility
- Positivity
- Grit

Respect

Respect is the cornerstone of our values system. Helping students develop the art of respect is a school-wide goal. All of the adults at Empowerment Academy endeavor to model respect in their interactions with our scholars and with one another. A sampling of the ways in which our scholars are expected to demonstrate respect include:

RESPECT FOR YOURSELF – Scholars are expected in manifold ways -- including by their manners and in their school uniform dress – to show self-respect to carry themselves with a sense of dignity.

RESPECT FOR OTHERS – Scholars are expected to show support and encouragement for one another; to refrain from the use of hurtful stereotypes and to show sensitivity for one another's differences; to refrain from insulting, bullying, or humiliating others; and to refrain from physically, emotionally or sexually harassing other students. Scholars are expected to listen and respect adults in the building, including teachers, at all times.

RESPECT FOR FAMILY – Scholars are expected to respect and care for their family, and to practice this by respecting and caring for their school family. To this end, they are expected to listen and follow instructions given by their parents/guardians and by their teachers; to use an

appropriate tone of voice at home and in school; and to be honest and helpful to family and school family members.

RESPECT FOR YOUR COMMUNITY – Scholars are expected to respect not only the social, but also the physical communities of which they are a part; to respect their personal property and the property of other students; to maintain their school materials; and to care for the school grounds and property, pitching in to keep them clean and neat.

RESPECT FOR THE WORLD – Scholars are expected to demonstrate respect for all of the world's peoples and creatures, and for the environment, appreciating that our individual, our family's, and our community's well-being is intricately connected to the well-being of others and of the natural world.

Caring

Upon this foundation of Respect, we will build a culture of active caring – one that emphasizes actively providing help and support to peers, to family, to the communities of which we are a part, and actively taking care of what we respect.

Responsibility

At Empowerment Academy, all adults and students understand that we are the masters of our own destiny. Excuses enable failure. We have the power to control our lives and shape the future, but this can only be done through always taking responsibility for our actions and choices.

Scholars are expected to always take responsibility for their actions, whether these actions relate to academic results, social choices, or behavior. Scholars are expected to always be honest about their choices.

Positivity

At Empowerment Academy, we remain positive. We carry ourselves with a bright face and our head is always held high so that we can put forth our best selves to the world at all times. We remain positive as positivity is contagious.

We participate fully and always give 100%.

Grit

Grit can be defined as courage and determination. Grit is the backbone of active caring and shows itself as strength and perseverance.

At Empowerment Academy, teachers and staff will sweat the small stuff in pursuit of worthy goals, and grit will enable them to have tenacity, to always put their best foot forward, to surge ahead even when the going gets tough, and ultimately to supersede all expectations.

STAR Behaviors

To help our scholars develop the art of respect, we expect them to practice STAR behaviors:

S - *Stand/ Sit-Up Straight*

Students are expected to demonstrate good posture at all times. Unless given permission, students may not put their heads down on their desks. When sitting on a chair, students must sit with their bottom on the chair. When standing, students must have equal weight on both feet and their hands behind their backs or by their sides. When sitting on the rug, students must sit in a “Crisscross Applesauce” style and have their hands folded and in their laps.

T- *Track the Speaker with Your Eyes*

Students are expected to track the speaker at all times. When the teacher is talking, scholars need to follow the teacher with their eyes. Scholars should also track any student who has been given permission to speak by the teacher. Tracking the speaker will help all scholars to stay on task and concentrate on instruction. It is also the polite thing to do.

A- *Always Be on Task*

During instruction, scholars are expected to be on task 100% of the time with very few reminders by teachers. Students ask and answer questions by raising their hand and waiting for the teacher to call on them.

R- *Respect Your Teachers and Classmates at All Times*

There are no excuses for disrespectful behavior at Empowerment Academy Charter School. A student who has a disagreement with another student is expected to follow a three-step procedure in order to address the problem: (1) ignore the offending student (2) ask the offending student to stop (3) if the first two steps don't solve the problem, tell the teacher. Students who have been corrected by a teacher may not respond to that correction in a way other than following the directions given by the teacher. If a student feels that a consequence has been unfairly applied, the student may speak to the teacher after the lesson has ended. The teacher has the right to disagree with the student. All decisions made by the teacher will be final.

Consequences

When students break Empowerment Academy's code of conduct, the teacher will correct them, review the correct behavior, and practice the correct behavior with them. If the behavior continues, the students will face a series of consequences agreed upon and supported by teachers and parents.

These consequences are designed to be logical to match the offense and correct misbehavior and deter students from making poor choices in the future. In administering consequences, school personnel will take into account such factors as the severity of the offense, the age of the student offenders, students' histories and/or other inappropriate behaviors, and any other factors deemed relevant. Please see the “Discipline” component of this handbook for more details.

ACADEMICS AT EMPOWERMENT ACADEMY

Empowerment Academy Charter School maintains a rigorous academic program that prepares scholars to graduate from a four-year college and enjoy unlimited career opportunities. To achieve this goal, we have an extended school day. This means that the hours of instruction extends beyond the typical school day, to which you may be accustomed to.

Important elements of Empowerment Academy's academic program include:

- As part of our extended school day, the hours at our /Middle School (MS) campus are as follows:
 - Grades 5-8: 7:30 am - 3:01pm with afternoon bus services conducted between 3:03 pm - 3:45 pm
- Top-Notch, Caring Teachers;
- A rigorous curriculum, supported by Empowerment Academy's positive values and character education program;
- Highly effective instructional methodologies which combine the *Teach Like a Champion* pedagogical practices of America's top-performing charter school operators with a rigorous education program.
- Academic Progress Monitoring and Tutoring
- Homework where skills or knowledge items that were learned during the school day are practiced and reinforced.

Top Notch, Caring Teachers

Empowerment Academy Charter School has quality, caring teachers in every classroom who model a positive disposition; maintain orderly, decorated classrooms; guide our scholars using constructive feedback, positive reinforcement, and recognition of success; and possess very strong classroom management skills. To continually upgrade their skills, our teachers work together in professional learning communities to share ideas, receive observation and feedback from the administrative team, collaboratively improve their practice, and identify potential improvements in school and education program design. Moreover, our staff members go through a two-week training institute each summer, and then receive ongoing professional development training throughout the year.

The New Jersey Student Learning Standards

Empowerment Academy Charter School is committed to the nationwide effort to improve public education. It supports New Jersey's Student Learning Standards, originally adopted from the Common Core Standards, in English Language Arts and Mathematics, as well as New Jersey's challenging Student Learning Standards in other subject areas, including Science, Social Studies, Visual and Performing Arts, World Languages (Spanish), Health and Physical Education, Technology, and 21st Century Life and Careers.

These curriculum content standards ensure that students receive a rigorous, well-balanced education. For instance, the arts curriculum includes instruction not only in the visual arts and in

music, but also in dance and theater.

We expect all of Empowerment Academy's students to graduate from a four-year college, but we believe New Jersey's curriculum content standards align with the knowledge and skills that will be needed by students regardless of the post-secondary opportunities they pursue: four-year college, community college, technical training, military service, or direct entry into the workplace.

Moreover, these standards incorporate teaching and learning disciplines that will become ever more important in the 21st-century, as the mastery of new skills and "digital literacies" becomes essential to success in an increasingly innovation-based, global economy. Examples of such new skills and literacies include the ability to:

- effectively access, evaluate, and synthesize vast amounts of information;
- apply knowledge and skills to personal, workplace, and global challenges;
- work collaboratively in cross-cultural settings;
- solve problems creatively; and
- act ethically as citizens of the world community.

Our Educational Program

Empowerment Academy is dedicated to having a demanding curriculum with an intense, intellectual, and engaging approach to academics. Empowerment Academy Charter School is committed to the nationwide effort to improve public education. As listed above, we have a strong commitment to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards in English Language Arts, and Mathematics. Therefore, we have a curriculum team dedicated to ensuring Empowerment Academy is using the best curriculum materials available to prepare our students for lifelong success. This includes but is not limited to a Dean of Curriculum and Instruction dedicated to implementation and instruction of our English Language Arts and Social Studies curricula, a Dean of Curriculum and Instruction dedicated to the implementation of our Math and Science curricula, and Department Chairs tasked with the responsibilities of integrating the selected curricula year to year.

At Empowerment, we believe that all students, regardless of their ability levels, can learn and achieve very high academic standards provided they want to learn. For this purpose, students undergo continuous monitoring to prevent the development of knowledge gaps during their learning process that could hinder further progress. By motivating students, fostering a desire to learn, and providing an efficient and high-quality educational experience, our curriculum will help each student achieve his/her full potential.

Some important features of the Empowerment Academy's Curriculum include:

- A safe, disciplined, and positive environment that encourages learning and responsible behavior;
- A thorough combination of proven published curriculums with supplemental objectives and materials in order to remain at the helm of closing the achievement gap;
- A well-structured, rigorous dedication to English Language Arts (ELA)
- A well-structured, rigorous, cognitively guided dedication Mathematics;

- Books designed to dovetail precisely with the curriculum;
- Guided Reading to target specific reading levels;
- Hands-On experiential based Science instruction;
- Dedication to language acquisition and Spanish instruction;
- Targeted writing instruction using a proven purchased curriculum;
- Proven instructional methods that keep students engaged and learning efficiently;
- Timely tracking of student performance through regular assessment to fill any learning gaps

How Empowerment Academy Addresses Different Learning Styles and Special Needs

Guided by assessment data, we differentiate instruction to ensure that each scholar is taught in ways that help him or her make rapid academic progress. In addition, Empowerment Academy uses sophisticated assessment tools to identify English Language Learners and students with other special needs, and then offers a variety of customized support to these students to ensure that they succeed academically.

A Typical Student Day at Empowerment Academy

Schedules vary, but a typical day for a 5-8 student might look like this:

7:30 am	Arrival and Breakfast
7:50 - 8:05 am	iReady Blended Learning Activity
8:05 am-8:07 am	Transition to first period
8:07 am-3:01 pm	• Academic and Specials Blocks • Blocks are approximately 50 minutes in length • Lunch and Recess (approximately 50 minutes in length)
3:01 pm	Dismissal for Pick-Up Students
3:03-3:24 pm	Dismissal for Bus Students
3:45-4:45 pm	Afterschool/Enrichment Programming (if enrolled)

Daily School Arrival Policy

Students will be expected to say “Good Morning” and/or wave to school leaders upon their arrival to school. This reinforces our Core Value of Respect for one’s community and, more broadly, of respect for others, generally.

For our scholars in grades 5-8:

- Morning activities will begin at 7:50 am.
- If a student is being dropped off, they may arrive between 7:30 am and 7:50 am.
- If a student will be receiving breakfast, they must arrive no later than 7:30 am. Students will be marked tardy beginning at 7:51 am.

- Bus students may arrive between 7:30 am and 7:50 am. In the event that a bus arrives late, students will receive breakfast and will not be marked late as this is a circumstance beyond their control.

Daily School Dismissal Policy

For the MS Campus, the dismissal time for pick up kids will be staggered.

For our scholars in grades 5-8:

- Dismissal will take place between 3:03 pm - 3:45 pm.
- Pick Up students will be the first to dismiss.

Families of pick up students will be granted a 15 minute grace period for pick up. Any students who remain at school beginning at **4:00 pm for Grades 5-8**, will incur a late fee of \$1.00/minute. Once your late fee reaches the threshold of \$15.00, your child will be automatically enrolled in aftercare as a drop in student. You will, then, be responsible for the additional drop in aftercare fee of \$15.00 (a total of \$30.00). Please be prepared to pay the late fee to the receptionist upon arrival at school. If you cannot pay the fee at that time, you will incur a balance, and additional action may be taken.

At the start of a student's matriculation, each family is required to complete a Permission to Release form. This form will provide us with information pertaining to which adults (18 years or older) who are permitted to pick up a child at the end of the school day. **Children will not be released to anyone not listed.** Please be sure that you and/or all permitted adults are equipped with official photo identification (such as a state issued Driver's License) as your child will not be released to anyone without it, especially within the first weeks of school. If someone other than those indicated on the list will be picking up your child on a given day, you must send an email to transportation@empacad.org and your scholar's teacher explaining the arrangement **before 11:00 a.m.** That person must have and present photo identification for pick up. Any custody arrangements, restraining orders, or court documents must be submitted to the main office to have legal guardians added and/or removed from a student's pick up list.

If your student is typically a bus student but you would like to pick them up one day--either early or at the end of the day, you must email transportation@empacad.org, **by 11:00 am**, to notify us of this change. **Please do not just write a note to your teacher.** If you come to pick up your bus student at dismissal and you have not indicated that your child will not be taking the bus, your child will not be waiting for you. You will have to wait until all pick-up children dismiss and your child can be safely signed out before taking them home.

You can provide permission for you scholar to walk home if the following requirements are met:

- a) Your home is no more than 1 mile from the Empowerment Academy LES campus OR no more than one mile from your child's designated bus stop;
- b) Your child is in Grade 4 or higher OR Your K-3 scholar is being accompanied by a scholar in Grade 4 or higher;
- c) A parent or guardian has submitted the Permission to Walk home form **at least 2 days** before the arrangement is to take effect. ***Verbal instructions will not be accepted.***

Early Dismissal and Late Arrival

Please review our Attendance Policy pertaining to Early Dismissal and Late Arrival located on page 22.

Afterschool Programs

Empowerment Academy offers an array , club activities, athletics, and tutoring. These programs occur during the following hours: MS Campus 3:45pm - 5:00pm.

These programs are provided for the benefit of Empowerment Academy scholars and/or working families and may be offered free of charge. However, please note that these programs are not core elements of Empowerment Academy's education program and scholars will not be permitted to participate in them if they do not adhere to school rules, policies, and/or if parents/guardians fail to consistently meet pick up requirements at the end of the programs. Late pick-ups from aftercare, enrichment, or athletic programs will be assessed. Please reference the "Daily School Dismissal Policy" on page 12 for our protocol for assessing late fees.

Families enrolled in club activities, athletics, and/or tutoring will be granted a 10 minute grace period for pick up. Thereafter, the family will be assessed a late fee of \$1 per minute, which is due upon arrival. If the late fee goes unpaid, scholars may be prohibited from participating in the program(s) until reconciled.

Three or more violations of rules relating to pick-up time or scholar behavior will result in a scholar being removed from a program.

Lastly, please note that although *some* of the programs may provide scholars with an opportunity to work on their homework, this is neither the norm nor the expectation. It will be vitally important for parents/guardians to ensure that all assigned homework is complete and/or checked for completion once your child has arrived *at home*.

Life's Work Policy

Homework is referred to as "Life's Work" at Empowerment Academy as we believe that self-discipline and the skills developed are directly connected to all of the great things your scholar will be able to accomplish in life. Martin Luther King, Jr., didn't begin his life's work when he became active with the Civil Rights Movement. He began it when he was a small child and worked day-by-day to discipline himself, subsequently developing his skills and character. It was the work that he performed throughout his childhood that made his later *life's work* possible.

With that stated, Life's Work is a critical part of each scholar's learning success. It reinforces learning that has taken place during the school day in a way that helps scholars truly retain and progress towards mastery of newly learned skills/ acquired knowledge. In addition, it develops good study habits and scholars' academic self-discipline.

It is vital, therefore, that parents/guardians take great interest in their scholar's homework, and support their scholar's development of good study habits and academic self-discipline. To accomplish this, we highly encourage parents/guardians to commit to the following:

- Reserve a quiet, well-lit space at home where your scholar can do their homework daily;
- Help your scholar develop a routine that includes homework completion daily;

- Establish a time within the routine that will ensure that your scholar is mentally sharp versus tired during completion;
- Help your child develop a habit of reviewing their work before *and* after completion.
- Develop your own routine of checking your scholar's work for high quality completion and supporting them when a challenge arises

Scholars are responsible for returning homework promptly when due. Homework must be completed in full and in accordance with Empowerment Academy Charter School's high standards for quality work and professional presentation. Children who repeatedly fail to turn in completed homework assignments may be required to complete the work during other times throughout the school day that will restrict them from participating in fun, enjoyable activities. Lack of homework completion or quality completion may also impact their report card grades. If your scholar is having a problem with completing assigned homework, please do not hesitate to contact their teacher(s) for assistance. They will be happy to help.

Homework Responsibilities

We hold Empowerment Academy's teachers accountable for creating homework assignments that are meaningful and build a school-home connection. We strive to ensure that it:

- reinforces classroom instruction;
- is varied in type;
- helps students fully retain and progress towards mastery of newly acquired skills and/or knowledge;
- provides a way for teachers to monitor a scholar's progress to mastery of the newly acquired skills and/or knowledge.

Additionally, we hold teachers accountable for reviewing homework for academic trends and using those trends to reteach key concepts. With that stated, we have expectations of scholars and parents/guardians to ensure that we are working together to accomplish the goal of academic success by completing homework on time and according to the due date.

Scholars are expected to:

- promptly inform parents/guardians of any assignments given in class;
- accept responsibility for completing assignments on time, accurately, and neatly;
- homework must be turned in daily on the given due date
- inquire, retrieve, and complete any missed assignments due to an absence;
- always try their best;
- *read* daily, even when there is no homework assigned for the evening. Depending on your child's grade level this may range anywhere from, at minimum, 30 - 60 minutes per day

Parents/guardians are expected to:

- adhere to the commitment outlined in the "Life's Work Policy" starting on page 13
- talk to your scholar about what they have learned at school and through their homework as well as the importance of learning new skills (despite their level of difficulty);
- encourage your child to develop a positive attitude about learning
- help your child develop academic, social, and personal goals;

- provide access to books regardless of whether you are reading to your child or they are reading independently. Please take advantage of Jersey City's Free Public Library system, it is a great resource for gaining access to books at minimal to no cost.
- review, respond, and sign the parent/teacher communication logs each night. This includes the reading log.

Any log associated with Life's Work that is not signed by a parent/guardian, will be deemed and marked as incomplete. Please do not forget to sign the provided logs each night.

Empowerment Academy's Academic Year and Grading Policy

At Empowerment Academy, the academic year is divided into four terms referred to as quarters. Throughout each trimester, we assess scholars' progress towards mastery of academic skills taught. This provides us with valuable information of when, why, and how to support a scholar who may be struggling with a concept OR how to push scholars who are excelling with specific concepts.

- EA will administer periodic assessments to help guide our instruction.
- The cycle of new learning, review, and assessment helps our scholars move learned material from their short-term memory to their long-term memory, building a foundation of mastered skills and acquired knowledge.
- The assessments help to increase students' academic confidence and abilities as they will become more intuitive to their areas of strength and growth as well as acknowledge the compounding of achievement of skills and knowledge. **All components of grading are not weighted equally (including assessment types).**
- We take a data-driven approach to instruction via formative assessments so that we may actively monitor academic progress. This allows us to consider various strategies necessary to ensure progression towards mastery of skills.
- Report cards are distributed **four times per year** to parents/guardians. Receipt of report cards may require a Parent/Teacher Conference. Additionally, progress reports may be sent home between report card distributions.
- At the MS campus, we use a GPA grading scale. Below you will find a breakdown of the grading scale and the correlation to GPA calculation.

Grades 5 - 8 Grade Scale			
Percentage	Letter Grade	GPA	Honors GPA
90-100	A	4.0	4.5
85-89	B+	3.5	4.0
80-84	B	3.0	3.5
75-79	C+	2.5	3.0
70-74	C	2.0	2.5
66-69	D	1.5	2.0
<65	F	1.0	1.5

- At Empowerment Academy we strive to acknowledge achievements. Thus, we have three tiers of Honor Roll acknowledgement:
 - **Principal's List**- Awarded to students who have all A's (4.0/4.5 GPA) per term within the academic year
 - **High Honor Roll**- Awarded to students who have A's and B+'s (3.5 - 4.0 GPA) per term within the academic year
 - **Honor Roll**-Awarded to students who have A's, B+'s, and B's (3.0 - 3.5 GPA) per term within the academic year
- Please note, that ALL Empowerment Grading Policies are subject to change based on current student needs and data.

Home Instruction Policy

There may be times in which a student must be placed on Home Instruction for reasons including but not limited to chronic medical conditions, temporary disability (i.e. surgery), or excessive suspension due to code of conduct violations. Empowerment Academy will comply with all guidelines set forth by the Department of Education for fulfilling our Home Instruction responsibilities. If your child is placed on Home Instruction, please note that during all periods of instruction delivered in a student's home or other public setting, the student's parent or other adult who has been designated by the parent and approved by the Director of Education shall be present.

Promotion and Retention

The complete text of Empowerment Academy's policy relating to grade promotion and retention follows:

EMPOWERMENT ACADEMY'S PROMOTION AND RETENTION POLICY FOR GRADES 5 - 8

The mission of Empowerment Academy Charter School is to prepare students to succeed in college and in life. To fulfill that mission, the Board of Trustees recognizes that students should be placed at the grade levels to which they are best adjusted academically, socially, emotionally, and developmentally and which are age appropriate.

While Empowerment Academy's educational program provides for the continuous progress of students from grade to grade, with students spending one year in each grade, the Board of Trustees recognizes that, in some instances, students may benefit by repeating a grade level.

The decision to retain a student will be made in consultation with the appropriate school officials constituting the school team and the parent/guardian. However, the final decision for retention shall rest with the Head Dean.

Grade level promotion shall depend upon students having achieved sufficient mastery of the prerequisite skills and knowledge for the next class or grade level. Throughout the year, teachers will assess students' mastery of sequenced academic standards and respond with appropriate interventions to help students progress academically.

To determine if students meet Empowerment Academy's standards mastery benchmarks for grade-level promotion, periodic, mid-course, and end-of-course tests will be given in each academic class and a weighted-average of each student's results will be calculated to yield a student score for the class. An overall score will also be calculated for each student's performance across academic subjects, with English Language Arts (ELA) and Math weighted more heavily. Students in grades one to five may be retained who fail ELA and/or Math or have a failing overall average. Kindergarten students will be retained if they are achieving significantly below grade level based on weekly and term assessments. Students may also be retained if their attendance does not meet state requirements. Maturity and behavior of the child is also taken into consideration.

Summer School is offered to different classes of students:

Retention Definite- Students who are being retained as they have not displayed academic readiness for promotion to the next grade level. Summer School will be recommended. This will be an opportunity for the scholar to continue to work on academic content that will help them prepare for the grade level in which they will be retained. However, it is not required.

Summer School Required- Students who are in serious jeopardy of retention if they do not attend and meet all requirements of Summer School. Summer School is required for students who have not displayed sufficient proficiency in grade level content. With Summer School instruction, they may provide insight about their readiness to be promoted to the next grade level. If they do not meet all

requirements of Summer School (including indication of academic readiness with respect to Empowerment Academy's research-based, standards mastery benchmarks) then they will not be promoted to the next grade level.

Summer School Recommended- *Students who have displayed sufficient academic readiness to take on the rigor of the subsequent grade.* However, Summer School will be beneficial for them in that they will have the opportunity to continue practicing taught skills in preparation for the next grade level. It is not required.

Promotion with respect to Attendance- *Students with chronic absenteeism are subject to retention determinations.* Summer School will be required for students with chronic absenteeism as outlined by the New Jersey Department of Education and Empowerment Attendance Policy. If a student with chronic absenteeism does not attend Summer School regularly, they will be retained.

Note:

For students who meet the requirements for promotion, but have barely passing averages in Math or ELA, recommended academic interventions shall continue even after they enter the higher class or grade.

The school shall provide parents/guardians with regular written information, including report cards, relating to their children's academic scores, personal growth, attendance records, and disciplinary records.

Teachers shall endeavor to meet with parents/guardians on a periodic, scheduled basis to provide them with a face-to-face review of their children's learning progress, and shall call when academic or behavioral issues warrant so parents/guardians are made aware of and can help solve the problem. Following each quarter, the school shall notify the parents/guardians of children whose pace of standards mastery puts them at substantial risk of not meeting the school's requirements for grade-level promotion. Parents/guardians shall be reminded of the school's promotion/retention policies, its Summer School requirements, and what they can do to support the school's academic interventions and help their children progress academically.

By June, teachers shall call and/or meet with parents/guardians whose children will need to attend Summer School and shall inform them of the requirement. Parents must return a signed letter stating their acknowledgement and intent.

If, after attending Summer School, a student whose retention is recommended still does not meet the standards mastery benchmarks necessary for promotion, staff shall call and/or meet with the student's parents/guardians to inform them that their child will be retained in their current grade.

If a parent/guardian wishes to appeal promotion/retention decisions, they may first petition the School Grievance Committee consisting of parents and teachers.

If the parent/guardian wishes to appeal the decision of the Grievance Committee, the parent/guardian may petition the Board of Trustees. Nothing in this Policy shall obligate the School to provide interventions beyond those required by law.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDANCE AND ON-TIME ARRIVAL

Research shows an *extremely* high correlation between students frequently missing or being late to school and academic failure. Learning can only occur in school if students are present. The frequent absence or tardiness of students from classroom learning experiences disrupts the continuity of the instructional process and limits the ability of students to complete curriculum requirements successfully. Additionally, when a student transitions to class, even 5 minutes late, it disrupts the learning environment as instruction would have already begun. Parents/guardians and students are therefore expected to maintain a very high level of scholar attendance at school and on-time arrival.

Attendance is so important that New Jersey state law *requires* Empowerment Academy to document all days when a scholar is absent from school and categorize those days as either “excused” or “unexcused,” in accordance with strict state regulations and procedures. Per state regulations and procedures, a student’s attendance must be categorized as Present, Absent (unexcused), or Absent (excused). Empowerment Academy will monitor your scholar’s attendance, accordingly, closely throughout the year.

Please note that there are excused absences that DO NOT count against your scholars’ daily attendance. These excused absences include:

- Religious holidays approved by the state. A list of the New Jersey State Approved Religious Holidays can be found at the NJ Department of Education website, <https://www.nj.gov/education/holidays.shtml>
- Take your Child To Work Day; Empowerment Academy will require documentation of your child’s participation in this experience from your workplace.
- Additional Days issued by the Commissioner of Education

Please note that there are excused absences that DO count against your scholar’s daily attendance. These excused absences include:

- Serious, acute illness or death within the immediate family.
- Required attendance at court.
- Medically verified illness (requires parental note with verification determination to be made by school nurse or a doctor’s note after three days).
- Empowerment Academy will excuse up to 3 days for Visa/International circumstances only. Direct communication with the Director of Education (or his/her designee) in advance will be required. We want to be understanding of all familial circumstances.

*****Documentation for any and all excused absences is required.*****

Per bullet point pertaining to medically verified illness listed above, scholars should not attend school when exhibiting signs of illness. Such signs include a fever of 100.2°F and above, productive or discolored nasal discharge or cough, a rash of unknown origin, or suffering from diarrhea or vomiting.

Please see the “Health and Safety” on page 28 section of this handbook for complete signs of illness.

Providing Notification and Explanation of an Absence

Parents/guardians are responsible for notifying the school in advance, or as early in the day as possible, when a child is to be absent as well as the reason for the absence.

“Unexplained” absences are required to be classified as “unexcused.” So when calling the school to provide notification of an absence, please provide the child’s full name, *the reason for absence*, and the date(s) of absence.

If the school has not received advance notification via a morning phone call regarding a scholar’s impending absence, Empowerment Academy may contact the scholar’s family. If there are instances where parents/guardians are permitting excessive absenteeism, late arrivals, or where the number of cumulative absences is high, letters will be sent home even if the absences are “excused.” Under New Jersey State law, **a total of 18 absences in a school year** is considered to be excessive and may result in retention.

Unexcused Absences

On a day when an absence/lateness is for reasons other than those noted above as “excused,” the day of absence/lateness is recorded as “unexcused” and goes into your child's permanent record. Please note that family vacations and other non-educational activities are not included in the list of “excused” absences above. They are considered “unexcused” absences, and should be planned so they do not interfere with school attendance. We completely understand that we have a very diverse student population at Empowerment Academy, with many families having homes in different countries. However, we cannot excuse absences for trips out of the country. No matter the circumstance, these absences cannot be excused and the trips must be planned in accordance to our school calendar. Parents/guardians must assume full responsibility for all missed academic assignments and should not expect teachers to provide work in advance of such absences.

Under state law and administrative code (NJSA 18: A and NJAC 6A), the following *Notification Process for Excessive Absences* must be followed when absences are “unexcused”:

1) The Warning Letter: For 3 cumulative unexcused absences, the guidance counselor will email the family to note the number of student absences. When emailing the Guidance Counselor will include the campus Dean of Students so they are looped in as well to the students' excessive absences.

2) Phone Call to Parent/Guardian and Second Warning letter: For 5 cumulative unexcused absences, a phone call will be made to the parent/guardian of the student from the Guidance Counselor, DOS, or a member of school leadership alerting them that because of their child's excessive absences, they are in danger of failing.

3) Administrator & Parent Conference: If the excessive absences persist after the phone communication has been made, the Administration will require the parent come in for a conference regarding the excessive absences. The parent will be given a second in danger of failing notice to sign. This meeting will be required for the parent/guardian of any student with 7 more cumulative absences.

4) For cumulative unexcused absences of 10 or more, the student is considered truant. For students between the compulsory school ages, the school district will make mandatory referral to the court program as required by the **NJ Administrative Office of the Courts**. The school will make contact with the parents, cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, and will proceed in accordance with **NJSA 18A, Compelling Attendance at School**, and other applicable State and Federal statutes, as required

Chronic Absenteeism

A student who has been absent from school for *any reason (excused or unexcused) 18 days or more* is considered absent. Schools with a chronic absentee rate of 10% or more are reported to the NJ Department of Education and are at risk of sanctions.

Court Fines / Denial of Grade Promotion for Excessive Absenteeism

It is important that parents/guardians understand that school attendance in the state of New Jersey is compulsory and that under Title 18A, Chapter 38, Article 3 of New Jersey's Revised Statutes, the State of New Jersey could subject parents/guardians who permit excessive school absences by their children to court-imposed fines.

State law further stipulates that if a school has exhausted the above precautions, notices and warnings, and a scholar continues to accrue excessive absences, after the eighteenth chargeable absence, retention in their current grade for the upcoming school year becomes a possible result.

Empowerment Academy will work with families to find solutions to attendance issues and/or concerns.

Absence During Testing Periods

If a scholar has an absence during Empowerment Academy and/or State standardized testing periods, which are advertised on the Empowerment Academy School Calendar, he/she will only be able to make-up the test during the scheduled retake period that follows the testing period. Scholars that miss testing days repeatedly may be called in for a parent meeting with the child's teacher. Moreover, missed exams during the scheduled retake period may result in a failing grade for that exam.

Absence and After School/Evening Events

Please also note that except under previously approved and special circumstances, a scholar who is absent from school during the day may NOT participate in afterschool or evening events, and under no circumstances may a scholar who is absent due to illness participate in such events.

Drop-outs

A student who has been absent for *10 or more consecutive days* for reasons other than illness (i.e. family travel) will be presumed to be a "drop out" and reported as such unless the parent makes a

compelling case otherwise. It is within the school's total discretion to make the determination. Under these circumstances, a student may be dropped from our school roster. Re-enrollment via our regular process will be required. If there is not a seat available, the student will be placed on our wait list.

Tardy and Early Pick-Up Policy

Attendance of your child is of the highest importance and we do ask each family to ensure their child is in school for the entire school day.

Please try to arrange appointments for after school or after hours on scheduled half days, whenever possible. The following penalties will be issued:

- If your child accrues FIVE (5) tardies, they will incur ONE (1) unexcused absence. Tardy is marked when a scholar arrives at school at 7:51 am and beyond.
- If your child is picked up early FIVE (5) times, they will incur ONE (1) unexcused absence. Early pick up is anytime prior to 2:50 pm in Grades 5-8.

Parents/ guardians must notify us when an early pick-up is required (i.e. doctor's appointment) via phone call and/or email to [email address] by no later than 11:00 am.

Please note that multiple early pick-ups and/or tardies may necessitate a parent conference, as taking your scholar out of school before the end of the school day or having them arrive late can be very disruptive to the classroom and school routines and procedures. Additionally, early pick ups and tardies will affect your scholar's attendance rate and may deprive them of quality instruction. With half days taking place throughout each month, there are ample opportunities to schedule appointments outside of school hours. We, kindly, ask that you make every effort to do so. Lastly, your child will not be eligible for Perfect Attendance Awards, etc. under these circumstances.

If you will need to pick up your child before the school day ends, please provide advance to the school. The following will be required upon arrival:

- Stop at the Security Desk; *AND*
- Sign the Early Dismissal Sign-Out Sheet.

A child will only be dismissed early only to a parent/guardian or an authorized adult. A phone call and/or email to the school containing the following information will be required:

- First and Last Name of authorized adult
- Child's First and Last Name
- Time of Pick Up

Please be reminded that proper photo identification will be mandatory in order for us to release a student for pick up of any kind.

We strongly discourage early pick-ups at the MS campus after 3:30 pm as the office and staff are fully engaged in school- wide dismissal procedures during these times. Please do not approach the security desk during these times to pick up your scholar.

CALLING, VISITING, VOLUNTEERING

At Empowerment Academy Charter School, we value an open and honest dialogue between parents and the school. Only in this way can we best meet the needs of our students. Parents have valuable information on their child's perceptions of school life. When things are not going well, we can be of tremendous assistance only if you bring the situation to our attention. It is school policy to address concerns on an individual basis. Please speak to your child's teacher first. If you have not reached a resolution after speaking to your child's teacher, you may then reach out to the Principal for your designated campus. You will find that we are always ready to discuss any concerns you may have. It is extremely important that when Administrators or Teachers contact families, that you keep the lines of communication open for productive dialogue about your child. It will be helpful for all parties to respond to outreach within 24 hours. Being that we service over 900 students, we ask for your patience by allotting us 24 hours to respond to a request for a call or meeting.

For security purposes, as well as for scheduling, all visits/tours should be arranged--in advance--through the main office, with a School Leader, or with your child's teacher. This will ensure that approval can be obtained prior to the visit/tour of all parents/guests. Additionally, all visitors must sign in at the security desk and receive a visitor's pass before visiting any classroom or taking a tour of the school buildings.

If at any time a parent, guardian, or visitor uses foul language or threatens physical harm towards any member of our community, they will be immediately asked to leave the premises.

Disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated. Empowerment Academy reserves the right to restrict the offending individual's admission into the building, either short term or long term. We strive to maintain a positive and safe community for all. Respectful and courteous behavior/language is expected and greatly appreciated at all times.

Open Houses & School Tours

We are extremely pleased that you have chosen to enroll your child at Empowerment Academy Charter School.

In effort to introduce parents/guardians and scholars to our staff, we provide opportunities for tours of facilities, schedule orientations, and plan Back to School nights. We, also, recommend that parents/guardians tour the school buildings during the school day when children are present. It is a great way to gather insight of what the school looks, sounds, and feels like.

Tours will be available throughout the year and can be scheduled in the Main Office. In addition, we recommend that parents attend other family events that will be scheduled throughout the school year.

Parent Conferences, Class Meetings, and Communication

At Empowerment Academy, teachers contact parents on an ongoing basis to discuss student progress. However, twice a year, we will have formal parent-teacher conferences. Please regard these as mandatory meetings and as the best time to get an overview of academic plans and

expectations relating to your scholar's progress. If you are unable to attend a conference at your scheduled time, it is your obligation to contact the teacher or a school leader 24 hours in advance, except in the case of an emergency.

You and/or the teacher(s) should feel free to call each other or request additional conferences at any time. Issues or concerns should be brought promptly to the attention of the teacher or Principal to ensure appropriate discussion and resolution.

If your scholar's teacher or a School Leader requests to have a meeting with you, please consider this a required obligation. We will be flexible around scheduling this meeting, but it must take place within one business week of the request. It is your responsibility to respond to all letters and/or phone calls within 24 hours. As a courtesy, we will do the same.

Class meetings may be called at other times throughout the school year for a variety of reasons. Please make every effort to attend these meetings, as well.

At Empowerment Academy, communication with parents is extremely important to us. For the duration of your scholar's enrollment with us, you will be automatically opted-in to receiving calls, text messages, and emails from our third party messaging service, School Messenger. We will use this district-wide to communicate effectively and efficiently with all stakeholders. You may opt-out of text messages at any time by requesting to be removed. Please do so by contacting the main office. Standard text messaging fees may apply.

Phone Calls and Individual Meetings

Upon calling the school to speak with a staff member, your call will be immediately directed to him or her, if available. If the staff member is not available, a message will be taken. Please allow 24 hours, generally, for a return response. If you do not receive a response within 24 hours, we ask that you assume the best and attempt to contact the staff member again, as day to day operations and instruction can cause missed emails or delays in transfer of messages.

Please note that while we encourage our staff to be in constant communication with families, we do protect and preserve all instructional time. This means that staff may not text while they are in front of children. Therefore, please do not expect an immediate response to a text. If there is an emergency, please contact the main office.

You may request a phone call or in person meeting with staff members. When interested in meeting with a staff member, we ask that you request an appointment via email. This is so that we can give your concern our full attention at the time of the meeting. We are not likely to accommodate drop in visits due to scheduling needs and professional requirements of staff. When requesting an appointment, please describe the general nature/reason for your request so that we can do our due diligence to address your needs. Confidentiality will always be respected and maintained.

Visiting Classrooms

You are always welcome to visit the school and the classrooms. As mentioned above, visitors must sign in at the office upon arrival. Out of courtesy to the teacher and students, we ask that you arrange your visit with your scholar's teacher in advance. Please let the teacher know what you are

most interested in observing. Classroom visits should not last longer than **one** hour unless special circumstances require otherwise.

Volunteering at Empowerment Academy

Empowerment Academy encourages parent engagement with the school through frequent home-school communication, visits, and parent volunteer opportunities.

Volunteering is another, especially, rewarding way to be involved in the educational life of your scholar. The community as a whole benefits from your service as well.

Some ways to volunteer include but are not limited to participation with Empowerment Academy's Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) or its Title I Parent Advisory Council. More information about the PTO and the Title I Advisory Council can be found on our school website.

Some volunteer opportunities may require fingerprinting and background checks. However, when parents/guardians volunteer in the classroom, they have a wonderful opportunity to understand how and why we do what we do at Empowerment Academy.

If you'd like to volunteer but you're not sure what you'd like to do, please contact your child's teacher and/or members of the PTO Executive Board and we'll help you lend a hand.

HEALTH, SAFETY, AND SECURITY SERVICES

Should you have any health-related questions or concerns relating to your Empowerment Academy scholar, please call Empowerment Academy's school nurse at your designated campus. Furthermore, any health information related to your child should be directly communicated to the nurse.

Empowerment Academy Charter School has filed a comprehensive safety plan with the Hudson County Superintendent of Education's Office, as required by law. This plan covers every type of emergency and was created in collaboration with the Jersey City Police and Fire Departments, and County Department of Education.

The School has not had problems with security, but in the interest of keeping our scholars and staff safe, we have security personnel, cameras, and systems in place all throughout the day. We ask that all visitors check-in at the Security Desk to obtain a visitor's pass before proceeding into any of our school buildings. Be prepared to show Security photo identification in the event that they do not already recognize you.

Immunization Records/Health Forms

The State of New Jersey Department of Health requires that each child be immunized in accordance with the requirements for children enrolling in school. You can find the New Jersey State immunization requirements and list of immunizations by visiting https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/imm_requirements/k12_parents.pdf

- If you have not provided the required immunization record or health form, Empowerment Academy is not permitted to allow your scholar to attend classes until the paperwork is

submitted to the school nurse by September of each year, except in the event that your scholar's required immunization age has not occurred by that time.

- New scholars may not be enrolled in kindergarten or first grade at EACS unless the parent/guardian submits proof of the following immunizations listed below:
 - **tDap-** Four (4) doses with one of these doses on or after the 4th birthday or any five (5) doses if your child has already received all the immunizations listed. Please bring the school nurse a copy of the immunization record so that the nurse can update your child's health record. Your child's record must include the date of each immunization given and listed with the doctor's signature.
 - **Polio Vaccine-** Three (3) doses with one of these doses given on or after the fourth birthday or any 4 doses.
 - **Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR)-** Two (2) doses after the first birthday
 - **Varicella (Chickenpox)-** One (1) dose after the first birthday.
 - **Hepatitis B Vaccine-** A series of three (3) doses.
 - **HIB Vaccine-** None required to enter kindergarten
 - **Mantoux Test (TB Test)-** IF the scholar is coming from another country proof of a TB test within one year of entry to kindergarten must be provided. If they have not had a TB test, they can go to their private doctor or local health department to receive the missing immunization.
 - New scholars may not be enrolled in any other grade level at Empowerment Academy unless the parent/guardian submits proof of the required immunizations for the child's age.
- **Immunization Summary**
 - Immunization records must be presented on the first day of school or at the time of registration. Updates of immunization records must be provided to the school nurse as the child receives his/her immunizations. The only exception is the thirty (30) day grace period for out of state or out of country students.
 - Vaccine administration dates must have listed the month, date, year and the signature of the person who administered it. The doctor/nurse must sign with the doctor's stamp. • If your child has not received all of the required immunizations to enter school, you must contact your doctor immediately or the local health department to get the immunizations that your child is missing. The health department is located at the City Hall Annex The address is as follows:
 - **1 Jackson Square Jersey City, NJ 07305 Phone: 201-547-6800**
 - Once completed, please submit the updated immunization record after each and every visit until all of the required immunizations have been administered.
 - • If any of the immunizations were not given because of medical reasons you must bring in a letter from a licensed physician. All medical exemptions must be updated each year with a doctor's signature and stamp.

Special Notes

- Prior to the start of school in September, each new student must submit their annual physical examination completed by a licensed physician. The form must be signed and stamped by the doctor. The Annual Physical Form can be obtained from the school nurse, main office and/or from clicking on the following link:
<https://www.state.nj.us/health/forms/ch-14.pdf>
- If your child lives in an old building, as the school nurse, we recommend to all parents/guardians that your child be tested for lead for their safety.
- *Any returning students who are lacking the required immunizations during the previous 29 school year and who return to school in September without proof of required*

immunizations will be excluded from school until proof of immunizations is submitted to the school nurse. This is a state mandated requirement and compliance is non-negotiable. Absences as a result of lack of immunizations WILL NOT be excused.

- Students transferring from schools within the state may not be admitted without a complete health record.
- Students transferring from out of state or country are allowed up to thirty (30) days to provide proof of their immunization history. The thirty (30) day grace period is used for Empowerment Academy to obtain the student health record before excluding the student from school for Immunization non-compliance. Students from a foreign country must have a Mantoux test (TB test) or proof that it has been administered within one year before they can start school.

Medication

Student medication (including homeopathic medicine) may not be kept in the classroom, in student lunch boxes, backpacks, or lockers (if applicable).

If prescription medication needs to be administered in school, neither the school nurse nor other school personnel can administer it without a physician's consent form. These forms are available in the main office of your designated campus. Please note that we will not administer non-prescription medicine (including over the counter such as Tylenol) to students without written permission from a doctor.

Before any medications, including over the counter, can be administered to your child at school the following requirements must be met:

- The prescribing physician or nurse practitioner must sign the doctor's order form called "Authorization of Medications to be Taken during School Hours" and include the medical diagnosis, name of medication, dosage, route time and frequency, duration, side effects, and if the child is authorized to medicate herself/himself with a nurse/teacher's supervision. These doctor's orders are only good for one academic school year which is September to June and must be renewed annually in September of each year. There will be no exceptions.
- The parent/guardian must also sign the aforementioned medication consent form to request that their child be assisted in taking medication(s). Giving the school nurse permission to administer prescribed medications to your child relieves the board and its employees of any liabilities pertaining to administration of such medication. Student medication cannot be kept in the classroom, lunch boxes, backpacks, or lockers (if applicable).
- All medication including over the counter shall be brought to school by parent/guardian. Children are not allowed to carry medication to school with the exception of inhalers or EpiPens. It poses a health risk otherwise. The Inhaler/Asthma pumps and/or EpiPen must be pre-approved by a Medical Doctor for the student to self-medicate himself or herself. Students must not share their medications with other students.
- Medications should be brought to school in its original container, unopened, sealed, and appropriately labeled by the pharmacy with the child's name. This is to prevent loss as well as administration of the wrong medication to the wrong student.

- **Please note: Any open medication will not be accepted by the school nurse. If medication is a partial dose (1/2 tablet), please make sure all medication is cut in half by the pharmacy before giving medication to the school nurse.**
- The school will provide a secured, locked space for the safe storage of all medication.
- The school nurse or parent/guardian are the only individuals permitted to administer medication at school with the exception of asthma inhalers and EpiPens, which are allowed for self-administration with the pre-approval of the child's doctor denoting that a nurse/teacher can supervise the administration of such medication.
- Record of administration of medication to your child will be kept and maintained by the school nurse.
- At the end of the school year, all medications MUST be picked up by a parent/guardian on the last day of school in June. If not, it will be disposed of appropriately.

Yearly Screenings

- Physical examinations are completed one time per year, by the student's primary doctor, for students specifically in Kindergarten, Fourth, and Sixth Grades.
- Height, weight, vision, hearing, Body Mass Index (BMI), and blood pressure screenings must be completed for all students by the school nurse at your designated campus.
- A Scoliosis screening for all students in Fourth, Sixth and Eighth grades must be performed by the school nurse or by the child's primary care physician at the age of 10 years.
- Dental screenings should be performed yearly or as required by the child's dentist
- Upon the completion of screenings, parents/guardians will be informed by mail or phone call by the school nurse if there are any concerns noted. The parent/guardian is expected to follow-up with the child's primary doctor for further evaluation and treatment as well as provide pertinent information to the school nurse.

Sick or Injured Children

School personnel are trained in methods of dealing with illness or injury. A parent will receive a call from the school if the nurse, teacher, or office staff thinks there is a need, but not for every minor injury. It is imperative, therefore, that parents provide phone numbers for use in emergencies, and that these numbers remain up to date.

At the beginning of the school year, parents may give permission for school personnel to treat minor scrapes and bruises. More serious injuries are recorded via an accident/incident report and will be reported to a parent before the student leaves school, or sooner, as appropriate.

A child who is not well enough to go outdoors is not well enough to come to school. Outside time is a regular part of our daily schedule and we have no supervision in place for children who would like to or need to stay inside, apart from their classmates.

To avoid having your scholar get sick, please ensure that he or she is always appropriately clothed. During cold weather seasons, children should be dressed in attire appropriate for outdoor recess, including hats and gloves. Additionally, consistently practice and reinforce good hygiene procedures.

The School Health Office is intended to take care of school related injuries. Therefore, home injuries should not be referred to the school nurse unless there is a written doctor's order informing the nurse of the treatment needed while in school. If the child is injured or becomes ill while at school, the parent/guardian will be contacted by the school nurse. The child may not remain in school while ill, as she/he will be a source of contagion to staff and other scholars. The parent/guardian should not send the student to school if the student is not feeling well or if they have any of the following symptoms:

- Bad cold- Symptoms include but are not limited to coughing, a runny nose, and lethargy with a with or without a fever
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Conjunctivitis (commonly known as Pink Eye)- Symptoms include but are not limited to itchy, red, tearing, painful, crusty, and pinkish colored eyes. It is highly contagious. ➤ Sores any place on the child's body that are infected and have a smelly drainage or discharge.
- Poison Ivy, ringworm and any other contagious skin conditions (i.e. Chickenpox and Scabies).
- **Temperature of 100.2 degrees or above. A child should be fever free for 24 hours before returning to school. Upon returning to school the child must be screened by the school nurse before going to class.**
- Students will be screened for head lice and the parent/guardian will be notified of the results. If the screening results are positive the student must be taken home for treatment.
- Emergency forms are sent home to be filled out by the parent/guardian for the student's protection. The information required on the emergency form is the address, home and cell phone numbers, and place of employment of the parents/guardians. If any of that information changes, the school must be notified immediately to keep the emergency contact information current. Please do not list names of individuals or phone numbers on the emergency form if they cannot be reached during school hours. Also, do not list individuals without informing them.

Empowerment Academy is a nut- free school for all children who have peanut allergies. Please inform your child to refrain from eating foods from other students, especially if they have allergies.

After an absence of THREE (3) consecutive school days because of illness, students are required to report to the health office to be screened by the school nurse before being able to return to class. The student should report to the school nurse with a note from their parent/guardian explaining their absence from school for THREE (3) days. The nurse will determine if the student is cleared to return to class.

- Students who are absent for illness/injury for THREE (5) consecutive school days or more are required to submit a doctor note to the school nurse. The note must be dated, include the student name, state that the child is not contagious, provide a date to return to school, and must be signed by the child's doctor. Notes signed by a parent/guardian will not be accepted. All doctors' notes will be filed in the student's health record in the health office.
- If the school nurse assesses a child and finds it necessary for a student to be excluded from school due to illness or some other medical emergency, the student must be picked up by a parent/guardian or other designated adult. The student cannot leave the school unaccompanied. When a scholar returns to school following a health office exclusion, the

- student must report to the school nurse to be re-screened.
- Any student returning to school wearing an orthopedic device such as a cast, sling, brace or using aids, such as a cane or crutches must bring in a doctor note to the school nurse. The doctor's note must clearly stipulate that the student may safely return to school with the device and that he/she has been instructed on how to use the device. The doctor's note must also indicate the diagnosis and any specific limitations. For example, if the student can continue with physical education and how long the device will be needed. A scholar will not be permitted to engage in physical activity of any kind unless otherwise stated via a doctor's note.
 - A student may not be admitted to school using an orthopedic device if the nurse, doctor, and/or Principal considers the device unsafe for the student to be in school.

Empowerment Academy reserves the right to require clearance from a doctor (to be verified by School Nurse) for any circumstance a School Nurse deems necessary. Empowerment will make special accommodations if necessary when excluding a child from school for a medical related issue. Please note all Health Policies are subject to change based on any current health crises.

Accident Insurance

Our school is covered under a Student Accident Insurance Policy. Please contact the School Business Administrator for any additional details.

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect

In the state of New Jersey, it is the school's legal obligation to report any signs of abuse and/or neglect to the New Jersey Division of Child Protection and Permanency (commonly referred to as DCP&P) as school staff members are deemed *mandated reporters*. These reports can be made by any staff member within our community placing a call to DCP&P. It is not up to our discretion to determine the validity or lack thereof when a child reports that he/she is being abused and/or neglected. Additionally, we are mandated to contact the proper authorities in the event that a student indicates that they are having suicidal ideations. A psychiatric evaluation and clearance by a medical professional may be required in order for a student exhibiting these behaviors to return to school. This is to ensure the safety of the students and/or staff.

Empowerment Academy believes that a child's physical and mental well-being must be maintained and is a top priority. The Board, therefore, believes that it is important to identify and investigate suspected child abuse or neglect immediately. The school district will cooperate with DCP&P in identifying and reporting all such cases, whether institutional or non-institutional. The Director of Education (or designee), School Nurse, and/or School Social Worker shall act as liaison between DCP&P and the district, facilitating communication and full cooperation between both institutions. The Board directs the Director of Education (or designee) to gather, maintain, and secure all relevant, confidential district records of any student alleged to be a victim of abuse and/or neglect by either school personnel or DCP&P--as defined by law-- and make it available for review.

The Board also directs the Director of Education (or his/her designee) to cooperate with DCP&P in scheduling interviews with any employee, volunteer, or student who may have information relevant to their investigation and/or an open case. If an identified official from DCP&P arrives at Empowerment Academy to interview a child, we are mandated to facilitate this process, uninhibitedly.

To ensure that staff members are well aware and informed of the signs of child abuse and/or neglect, Empowerment Academy will provide professional development that will serve as guidance for proper and effective identification. This may involve some level of involvement from the School Social Worker, the School Nurse, a School Leader, and your child's teacher.

Please note that, as mandated reporters, staff members are neither obligated to inform parents/guardians when a call/report to DCP&P nor identify the reporting party.

UNIFORM POLICY

The purpose of the student dress code is to promote high standards of conduct and behavior among students, instill a sense of personal pride in students, and to develop and maintain a wholesome learning environment that will contribute to academic achievement. Proper dress and attire is an important part of the school program. Thus, we have a school uniform all scholars are required to wear daily, except when permitted otherwise.

In the event that your scholar has a uniform infraction upon attending school (i.e. wearing jeans and/or a non uniform shirt) one or multiple times, your scholar will be placed in ISS (In School Suspension) and you will receive a call from the Instructional Support Counselor and/or the Dean of Students. We will afford you an opportunity to bring the correct article of clothing to school for your child. If you are unable to do so or we are unable to reach you, we may provide any spare uniform articles for your scholar to borrow. If we are unable to provide any spare uniform articles, your child will remain in ISS with the ISC or DOS for the day. Multiple Uniform Violations could also lead to a loss of privileges or other disciplinary action for your scholar.

All branded uniform items can be ordered and purchased from school approved vendors only. Please contact the School Registrar enroll@empacad.org if you are unsure of where to purchase uniforms. We highly recommend that parents write the name of their scholar, using a permanent marker, on the tags of all clothing so that in the event that an item is lost it can be easily identified and returned to you.

Uniform Guidelines

All Grades = Gold and Khaki

- All Scholars- Gold polo shirt with Empowerment Academy emblem (long or short sleeve)
- All scholars- A solid white or black undershirt must be worn beneath a uniform shirt
- All scholars- Khaki /black pants or shorts; may have a zipper or be pulled on (properly and neatly fitting. For example: not baggy, sagging or too tight)
- All Girls ONLY- Khaki skirts or skorts are permitted but must be no more than 2 inches above the knee in length.
- All scholars- A solid black or brown belt is required if the waist of the uniform pants are not well fitting
- All Girls ONLY- Solid black, white, or navy tights
- All scholars (OPTIONAL)- Black Sweater/Black crew neck sweatshirt with school emblem OR solid black sweater/solid black crewneck sweatshirt without any logos, designs. **Sweatshirts with hoods are not permitted.**
- All scholars- Closed toe shoes or sneakers ONLY.
 - Sandals, boots, Crocs, slippers, flip flops, or UGG Boots are not permitted
 - Boots may be worn to school during inclement weather BUT must be changed to the school permitted footwear once in the school building.
- Physical Education (P.E.) uniforms gold t-shirt with the school emblem and black sweatpants or gym shorts. These are to be worn on P.E. days only.
 - Biker shorts and leggings are not permitted
 - Sneakers are required on PE days

Additional Notes

For safety reasons we ask that our female scholars not wear large hoop earrings (i.e. larger than the size of a quarter) and long acrylic/gel nails. These features may result in injury if snatched or bent during school activities including but not limited to recess and P.E.

We highly encourage that scholars not wear an excessive amount of jewelry as they can become a distraction to learning. If a scholar wears a necklace of any kind, they will be asked to tuck it into their uniform shirt so that it is not seen.

Lastly, we are not held responsible for lost or stolen property of scholars. Therefore, we highly encourage that scholars leave high value belongings (such as jewelry, name brand jackets or caps) home to avoid them being misplaced or taken.

Backpacks, Extra Clothes, Student Dress-Down Days, Lost and Found

Please see below for guidelines around backpacks, extra clothes, dress down days, and lost and found items:

- All scholars should bring their belongings in a backpack each day. Backpacks with wheels, handles, etc are not permitted for safety reasons. Please ensure that your child's backpack is the proper size and fit for them.
- Occasionally, Empowerment will host dress down days for scholars as a fundraiser or fun way to engage in the school day. Please be sure to read communication pertaining to these days

carefully as well as ensure that your child abides by the rules. Also, please note that participation in dress down days is a privilege. Therefore, Empowerment Academy reserves the right to restrict a scholar's participation in such events for reasons including but not limited to multiple uniform infractions, behavioral concerns, or not abiding by the rules of previous dress down days. Footwear aligned to the uniform requirements is a must and all dress down clothing must be school appropriate, as deemed at the discretion of a school leader.

- Lost and Found items will be stored in a "Lost and Found" bin/container. After 1 month of storage, all items will be donated or disposed of. If your child loses an item (uniform or non uniform) please visit or have him/her visit the lost and found to locate it. We are not responsible for lost items and will not dedicate to locate any lost items for you.

DISCIPLINE

Safety, order, and discipline are all fundamentals to learning. While students need a challenging curriculum, dedicated teachers, and proper materials, they must also have a secure environment in which to learn. Therefore, it is the policy of Empowerment Academy Charter School that a safe environment conducive to learning shall be maintained at all times in order to provide an equal and appropriate educational opportunity for all students.

Empowerment Academy enforces a "zero tolerance policy" regarding discipline for certain infractions, including, but not limited to, the following: fighting; possessing, using, or threatening to use weapons; or the unlawful possession, use, or distribution of drugs on school properties or at any school sponsored/supervised activity. Empowerment follows all state regulations with respect to their Code of Conduct, exclusion, and restraint practices.

Scholars will be subject to disciplinary action if they engage in prohibited conduct while on school property, while attending any school-sponsored activity, or while in transit going to or returning from Empowerment Academy's campus (whether via foot, train, bus, or car). Such disciplinary action may include but is not be limited to the following measures: suspension, expulsion, and/or exclusion from school and all school sponsored activities.

Scholars may also be disciplined for conduct committed away from school property and outside school hours if, for example, the conduct is detrimental to the best interests of the Empowerment Academy, adversely affects overall school discipline, and/or results in a criminal charge or conviction.

In all such regards, Empowerment Academy shall always provide a fair and consistent approach to student discipline, within the context of scholars' rights and responsibilities. Please see our Appendix I: Tiered Response to Behavior for further details.

Our Positive Approach to Discipline

Our approach to discipline is rooted in a belief that the learning environment is sacred. At Empowerment Academy, we will do whatever it takes to make sure that every child is safe (physically, emotionally, mentally, and intellectually) and ensure that each and every one of them has the chance to learn without needless disruptions. We have very high expectations for student behavior and we "sweat the small stuff" to create/preserve a focused learning environment.

Our teachers will use a large array of strategies to promote positive behavior and to correct problem behaviors. Our faculty uses *positive* reinforcement whenever possible, and does its best to "catch

students doing the RIGHT thing.” We recognize and celebrate student successes at every opportunity.

We also use logical consequences and a problem-solving approach to help students fix behavior problems. Students may lose privileges (social time, trips, etc.) when they violate the rules but also receive rewards when they are following the rules.

Our Deans of Students (DOS) and Instructional Support Counselors (ISC) are the point people with respect to discipline concerns. They have the authority to determine the appropriate consequences for student behavior, but work closely with teachers, families, and students to help them learn and grow. The DOS and ISC ensure that they do due diligence to acquire relevant information about occurrences before settling upon a disciplinary action for scholars. They will always communicate the concern and consequence (if applicable) with the respective families.

Expectations for Time on Task

Empowerment Academy will not accept classroom distractions due its belief that no one or two scholars should be permitted to hold back an entire class. If scholars are being disruptive or are off-task, they will be subject to disciplinary actions (see the list below). Additionally, parents/guardians should expect regular calls from the DOS or ISC located at your respective campus and/or a conference request with staff to address and remedy the displayed behaviors by your scholar. It will be our goal to, jointly, develop an effective behavior plan that can be implemented both at school and home in effort to support a display of more positive behaviors from your scholar.

Zero Tolerance for Fighting

There is zero tolerance for fighting at Empowerment Academy. In almost every case, both scholars will be suspended. Parents will be required to pick up the scholars involved on the day of the incident as well as meet with school administrators regarding the conflict. Scholars will not be permitted to return to school until a conference has taken place between the parent(s) and a school leader.

We encourage non-violent conflict resolution. Scholars are expected to use conflict-resolution techniques to settle all disputes and report conflicts to staff members before they escalate. A student who has a disagreement with another student is expected to follow a three-step procedure in order to address the problem: (1) ignore the offending student (2) ask the offending student to stop (3) if the first two steps don't solve the problem, inform their teacher and/or DOS (or another school leader). Please promote these strategies at home. It is important for students to know the power of words.

Disciplinary Actions

Empowerment Academy has school wide guidelines in place that govern in-class learning and behavior expectations. To ensure that disciplinary actions are consistent, the following include but are not limited to the types of disciplinary actions that may take place:

- Exclusion from non-core classes (i.e. Art, Technology)
- Removal from Class
- A Call To Parents/Guardians
- An Administrator/Parent/Scholar Conference
- An Administrator/Scholar Conference
- The Implementation Of A Behavior Plan

- A Behavior/Academic Contract
- A Counselor/Parent Conference
- A Counselor/Scholar Conference
- A Counselor/Teacher Conference
- A Social Worker/Counselor Referral
- A Classroom Switch (due to safety issues only)
- In-School Suspension
- Out-of-School Suspension
- Long term suspension
- Loss Of Incentives
- Lunch Detention
- Mandatory Parent Shadowing
- Peer Mediation
- Reflection Form
- Reprimands And Warnings
- Restriction Of Participation In After School and/or Extracurricular Activities
- Teacher/Parent Conference (E-Mail, Letter, Telephone)
- Teacher/Scholar Conference
- Removal From Additional Services Such As Buses Or Intensives
- Removal from Field Trips
- Restitution and Reparation
- Alternative Classroom Placement
- Using recess as a time to reflect and practice

Loss of Privileges

Empowerment Academy offers scholars many privileges and opportunities. However, these privileges and opportunities may be taken away as a consequence for poor behavior. Privileges that can be lost include but are limited to: specials, choice time, participation in field trips, coming to school early or staying late, participation in after-school activities, use of school transportation, and socializing with classmates during breakfast, snack time, or lunch.

Detention/Reflection Time

Reflection time is a disciplinary strategy that may be implemented at any grade level at Empowerment Academy. This is a time for scholars to think about their actions. However, detention may occur only at the Middle School level.

Out of School Suspension

Scholars who put the safety of themselves or others in danger may be subject to an out of school suspension. A parent/guardian will be required to pick up student immediately. Should a parent/guardian refuse to pick up a child who is a safety risk, the school reserves the right to contact outside services.

Possible Causes for Out of School Suspension (short term or long term):

- Cursing directly at an adult or peer
- Discriminatory language/slurs at an adult or peer
 - protected class: race, gender, religion or disability

- HIB
- Cell Phone-usage/Technology Violation
- Leaving school premises
- Physical Altercation
- Play Fighting (Harm)
- Possession of Contraband
- Theft
- Unsafe Conduct
- Inappropriate Physical Contact
- Vandalism

In-School Suspension and/or Classroom Removal

At Empowerment Academy, in-school suspension (ISS) may be used when a child continues to misbehave or disregards the expectations outlined in the *Family Handbook*. While on in-school suspension, we hope to remove all distractions so that the scholar can focus strictly on academics and reflect on their behavior. Parents will be notified when the decision to invoke the consequence of an in-school suspension has been made.

The parent/guardian will be expected to come to school for a conference within 48 hours if their child is placed on in-school suspension. The length of the in-school suspension is directly related to the offense and whether the scholar has taken responsibility for their actions.

A scholar in ISS will not be permitted to:

- Attend field trips
- Eat lunch at scholar tables in cafeteria
- Speak with other scholars during class or during free time
- Participate in classes on their daily schedule
- Participate in after-school or enrichment programs

Possible Causes for In School Suspension:

- Cursing-loosely using curse words
- Academic Dishonesty
- Disrespect to Adult
- Disrespect to a Peer
- Repeated Ignoring and Refusing
 - After ISC intervention
- Skipping Class
- Horseplay/Play fighting
- Uniform Infraction-out of compliance (Can not be fixed)
- Leaving class without permission

Procedures for Short-Term Out of School Suspensions

Scholars who put the safety of themselves or others in danger will be suspended immediately. An in-person conference between parent and School Leader is REQUIRED before a child may return to school after an out of school suspension. A child may be excluded from school until this meeting has taken place. Please note that any scholar who is excluded or not present in school post an out of school suspension is still subject to our attendance policy.

A short-term suspension is a denial to a scholar of the right to attend school and to take part in any school function for any period of time up to and including four days.

When a scholar is suspended, the school shall pursue the following steps:

- **Investigation**
 - notify the scholar of the misconduct;
 - accept information from the scholar and other persons who have knowledge of the incident. The scholar involved shall have the opportunity to recall his/her side of the incident;
 - determine the accuracy of the misconduct based on this information;
 - impose a short-term suspension at the discretion of the Principal (or his/her designee) based on the information gathered.
- **Implementation**
 - Once the Principal (or his/her designee) has determined that a short-term suspension is warranted, he/she shall proceed as follows:
 - inform the scholar of the suspension and the reason(s);
 - notify the parent by telephone or in person formal letter explaining the misconduct as well as outlining the length of the suspension, exact date of the scholar's return, and the date of the school leader/parent conference;
 - provide a formal letter explaining the misconduct as well as outlining the length of the suspension, exact date/conditions for the scholar's return, and the date of the school leader/parent. The letter must also include the scholars right to appeal the decision;
 - ensure that the formal letter is hand delivered or sent certified mail within 24 hours informing him or her of the suspension;
 - file a copy of the suspension in the scholar's cumulative folder in the school.

Procedures for Long-Term Suspensions and Expulsions

A long-term suspension is a denial to a scholar of the right to attend school and to take part in any school function for any period of time equal to or exceeding five school days. An expulsion is the denial to a scholar of the right to attend school and to take part in any school function permanently.

Right of Appeal

A parent or guardian may submit a written request to the Director of Education to appeal a short-term suspension, long term suspension, or expulsion within twenty-four hours of receiving notification of the suspension. The Director of Education will schedule an "Appeal Hearing" within five working days of receiving the written request. The scholar may be represented at the hearing only by parents or guardians and one additional adult, who may be legal counsel, a member of the clergy, a social worker, etc. Any relevant school personnel, who can provide additional insight, may be invited to the appeal hearing.

If legal counsel will be present for the appeal hearing, the school must be notified within 24 hours. The hearing will be conducted by the Director of Education and shall be closed to the public. It may include the presentation of evidence, testimony, and questioning of those present. The hearing will not be recorded verbatim by stenographic, tape, or other means. The Director of Education will notify the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the decision within 24 hours of the hearing. If the suspension is overturned, the cumulative record of the scholar and any other school-maintained records will reflect that conclusion.

If the suspension or expulsion is upheld and the parent/guardian wants to continue the appeal process, the parent/guardian may make a written request to the Empowerment Academy Discipline Committee, within two days of receiving the Appeal Hearing decision, stating why the suspension should be reversed or modified. The Hearing Officer will schedule the Appeal Hearing within five working days of receiving the written request. The scholar may be represented at the hearing only by parents or guardians and one additional adult, who may be legal counsel, a member of the clergy, a social worker, etc. The school must be notified within 24 hours of the hearing if legal counsel will be present. The hearing will be conducted by the Empowerment Academy Discipline Committee. The hearing shall be closed to the public and may include the presentation of evidence, testimony, and questioning of those present. The hearing will not be recorded verbatim by stenographic, tape, or other means. The Empowerment Academy Discipline Committee will notify the parent or guardian of the decision within 24 hours of the Appeal Hearing. If the suspension is overturned, the cumulative record of the scholar and any other school-maintained records will reflect that conclusion.

If the suspension or expulsion is upheld and the parent/guardian wants to continue the appeal process, the parent/guardian may submit a written request to the Empowerment Academy Board of Trustees, stating why the suspension should be reversed or modified within two days of receiving the Empowerment Academy Discipline Committee's Appeal Hearing decision.

The Hearing Officer will schedule the Appeal Hearing within five working days of receiving the written request. The scholar may be represented at the hearing only by parents or guardians and one additional adult, who may be legal counsel, a member of the clergy, a social worker, etc. The school must be notified within 24 hours of the hearing if legal counsel will be present. The hearing will be conducted by the Empowerment Academy Board of Trustees Discipline Committee. The hearing shall be closed to the public and may include the presentation of evidence, testimony, and questioning of those present. The hearing will not be recorded verbatim by stenographic, tape, or other means. The Empowerment Academy Board of Trustees will notify the parent or guardian of the decision within 24 hours of the Appeal Hearing. If the suspension is overturned, the cumulative record of the scholar and any other school-maintained records will reflect that conclusion.

If the Empowerment Academy Board of Trustees Discipline Committee upholds a short term suspension, the suspension shall be imposed, and such decision will be final.

If the Empowerment Academy Board of Trustees Discipline Committee upholds a long term suspension or expulsion, the parent/guardian may further appeal the decision following the New Jersey state guidelines for doing so. Please visit the New Jersey Department of Education website for further details pertaining to this process.

Make-Up Work after a Suspension

Scholars who are suspended shall be offered make-up work assignments. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to contact the school and make arrangements for the receipt and return of all assignments. In the case of long-term suspensions, unless other arrangements are made, teachers are to give work in increments appropriate for the length of time the suspension will take place. Scholars must complete and return work before receiving additional work. In some circumstances, home instruction may be provided as a result of a long term suspension per the

New Jersey state guidelines. This is not a guideline that is to be met per the request of the parent/guardian.

All IDEA mandates will be followed for scholars with disabilities.

Participation at School and School-Related Activities and Suspension

Scholars who have been suspended from school shall not be eligible to participate in any school functions for the entire period of their suspension, including paid after school/enrichment programs. Refunds will not be provided under these circumstances.

Repeat Offenders

Scholars who continue to receive suspensions, whether in-school, short, or long term may be expelled from Empowerment Academy. Additionally, scholars who have been suspended 3 or more times in their entire duration at Empowerment Academy may be expelled.

Due Process Procedures for Scholars with Special Needs

Scholars with disabilities have the same rights and responsibilities as other scholars, and may be disciplined for the same behavioral offenses. A multidisciplinary team will hold a manifestation meeting to determine if an incident was a manifestation of a scholar's disability. If the team finds that an offense was a manifestation of a scholar's disability, the scholar's disciplinary consequences will match that of an already developed behavior plan or we will create a behavior plan appropriate for the scholar's individual needs.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE POLICY

Empowerment Academy Charter School is dedicated to maintaining a drug-free learning environment and supporting the overall well-being of our students. This Substance Abuse Policy aligns with the guidelines set forth by federal and New Jersey state laws, particularly the New Jersey State Law N.J.A.C. 6A:16-4.3 and N.J.S.A. 18A:40A-10, which governs student substance abuse and prevention. Our approach focuses on education, prevention, and intervention to help students make healthy choices while ensuring that those involved in substance abuse are met with appropriate consequences and support.

Definitions

- **Substance Abuse:** The illegal use, possession, distribution, or being under the influence of alcohol, controlled dangerous substances (e.g., marijuana, cocaine, heroin), unauthorized prescription drugs, tobacco products (including vaping devices), or other illegal substances.
- **Controlled Dangerous Substance (CDS):** As defined by New Jersey law (N.J.S.A. 2C:35-2), including any illegal drug, narcotic, or unauthorized prescription medication.
- **Drug Paraphernalia:** Any item or device that can be used to consume, store, or distribute illegal substances, including pipes, rolling papers, or e-cigarettes/vaping devices.
- **School Property:** Includes school buildings, grounds, vehicles (including school buses), and any school-sponsored event, whether on or off school property.

Categories of Substance Abuse

- **Tobacco Products:** Cigarettes, cigars, chewing tobacco, etc.
- **Alcohol:** Beer, wine, spirits, or any other form of alcohol.
- **Illegal Drugs:** Marijuana, cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, prescription drugs without a prescription, etc.
- **Vaping:** Use of electronic cigarettes, vape pens, and similar devices, regardless of the substance used.

Empowerment Academy Charter School strictly prohibits the use, possession, or distribution of any drugs on school property, at any school-sponsored events off campus, and on any transportation provided by the school. Students suspected of being under the influence of drugs will be identified, evaluated, and reported in accordance with applicable laws. Any student who uses, possesses, distributes, or is found to be under the influence of drugs, whether on or off school grounds, will face disciplinary actions, which may range in severity based on the offense. Consequences can include suspension, expulsion, and/or exclusion from school activities. Law enforcement may be notified as appropriate. All drug-related incidents will be reported to the Commissioner using the state-approved reporting form.

Any student suspected of involvement with drugs and/or alcohol is required to undergo a medical examination. The medical examination shall include the following:

- Examination by a board approved physician
- Monitored urine screening and chain of custody
- Any additional medical test deemed necessary by the physician
- A note indicating the student is/is not physically and mentally able to return to school

Suspected Substance Abuse

If a staff member suspects a student is under the influence of drugs, alcohol, or controlled dangerous substances while on school property or at a school-sponsored event, the following procedure will be followed:

- The staff member will notify the Dean of Students & Principal.
- The student will be immediately removed from the classroom or activity for safety reasons and escorted to the nurse's office for evaluation.
- Parents/guardians will be contacted immediately by the Dean of Students or Principal.

Medical Examination and Drug Testing:

- The student must undergo a mandatory medical examination and drug/alcohol screening by a licensed healthcare provider within **24 hours** of the incident, in accordance with New Jersey state law (N.J.A.C. 6A:16-4.3).
- The student may not return to school until a written medical clearance report is provided, indicating the student is fit to return to school and is not under the influence of a controlled substance.

Confidentiality:

- All information related to substance abuse incidents, including medical results, will be treated as confidential and handled in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and applicable New Jersey laws.

Disciplinary Consequences and Intervention

1st Offense

- The student will be removed from the school environment and referred for a medical evaluation as described above.
- Parents/guardians will be notified, and a conference with the student, parents/guardians, and administration will be scheduled.
- **Disciplinary Action:**
 - **Suspension:** The student will receive a **three (3) day suspension** followed by a **five (5)** school days exclusion from extracurricular activities.
 - **Referral for Intervention:** The student will be referred to an external **substance abuse counseling service** for a **substance abuse evaluation** by a licensed healthcare provider and participation in a **substance abuse prevention program**.
 - **Educational Consequence:** The student will be required to attend **after-school reflection sessions** or an external education program on the dangers of substance abuse.
 - **Re-Entry:** A mandatory re-entry meeting will be held with the student, parents/guardians, administration, and external counselors to review the student's progress and set expectations for future behavior.
 - **Law Enforcement:** Depending on the severity of the offense, law enforcement may be involved, especially if the student is found in possession of illegal substances or distributing drugs.

2nd Offense

- The student will be removed from the school environment, and parents/guardians will be notified immediately.
- The student must undergo another mandatory medical examination and drug/alcohol screening within 24 hours.
- **Disciplinary Action:**
 - **Suspension:** The student will receive a **5 day suspension**, followed by a **twenty (20)** school days exclusion from extracurricular activities and the offense will be documented in the student's permanent file.
 - **Referral for Treatment:** The student will be required to undergo a formal **substance abuse evaluation** by a licensed healthcare provider. Ongoing participation in a substance abuse treatment or counseling program is mandatory, and parents/guardians must provide proof of attendance.
 - **Law Enforcement:** Depending on the severity of the offense, law enforcement may be involved, especially if the student is found in possession of illegal substances or distributing drugs.
 - **Re-Entry:** Re-entry will require a formal meeting with the student, parents/guardians, school administration, and the external treatment provider to assess the student's readiness to return to school.

3rd Offense

- The student will be immediately removed from school, and parents/guardians will be contacted.
- The student must undergo a mandatory medical examination and drug/alcohol screening within 24 hours.
- Law enforcement may be notified, especially if the offense involves the possession or distribution of controlled dangerous substances.
- **Disciplinary Action:**
 - **Suspension:** The student will receive a **10-day suspension** with a recommendation for

expulsion or placement in an alternative education program, pending further investigation and administrative review.

- **Referral for Long-Term Treatment:** The student will be required to participate in a long-term substance abuse treatment program with documented progress. Failure to comply with treatment will result in a recommendation for expulsion.
- **Permanent Exclusion from School Activities:** The student will be permanently excluded from extracurricular activities for the remainder of the school year.
- **Board Hearing:** A formal hearing with the Empowerment Academy Charter School Board of Trustees will be held to determine further disciplinary actions, including possible expulsion in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:37-2.

SCHOOL SEARCHES

Empowerment Academy authorizes the Director of Education his/her designee(s) to conduct searches of students and their belongings if the authorized school official has reasonable suspicion to believe that the search will result in evidence that the student violated the law or any of Empowerment Academy's rules. In authorizing searches, Empowerment Academy Charter School acknowledges both state and federal constitutional rights which are applicable to personal searches of students and searches of their possessions.

An authorized school official may search a student or the student's belongings based upon information received from a reliable informant. Students have no reasonable expectation of privacy rights in school lockers, cubbies, desks, or other school storage places. Empowerment Academy Charter School exercises overriding control over such school property, which may be opened and subjected to inspection at any time by school officials. Empowerment Academy Charter School will provide notification to parents/families if a search has taken place as soon as is practicably reasonable.

HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION, AND BULLYING (HIB) POLICY

Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying Investigation Process

The HIB Coordinator or Anti Bullying Specialist (ABS) is responsible for determining whether an alleged act constitutes a violation to this Policy. The HIB Coordinator or ABS shall conduct a prompt, thorough and complete investigation of the alleged incident within 10 school days, and complete /submit the required reports. The HIB Coordinator will maintain a record of each investigation regarding allegations of harassment, intimidation, and bullying.

In the event there is information relative to the investigation that is anticipated but not yet received by the end of the 10-day period, the HIB Coordinator may amend the original report of the results of the investigation to reflect the information.

Please see below for the step-by-step process for processing HIB reports:

- The Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights provides detailed procedures and timelines for reporting incidents of bullying. All school employees and contracted service providers are required to report such incidents. All acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying must be reported verbally to the school Director of Education (or his/her designee) on the same

day when the school employee or contracted service provider witnesses or receives reliable information regarding any such incident.

- The school employee must submit a written report of the incident to the Director of Education (or his/her designee) within two days.
- The Director of Education (or his/her designee), in consultation with the anti-bullying coordinator/ specialist, makes a preliminary determination as to whether a reported incident or complaint, assuming all facts presented are true, is a report within the scope of the HIB law. The parent may appeal the decision not to initiate an investigation via written communication to the Grievance Committee. If the parent/guardian is not in agreement with the Grievance Committee's decision, then they may appeal the decision with the Board of Trustees.
- The Director of Education (or his/her designee) must inform the parents or guardians of all students involved in the alleged incident and may discuss the availability of counseling and other intervention services.
- The Director of Education (or his/her designee) must initiate an investigation of the incident within one school day of the report.
- The school HIB Coordinator/ Anti-Bullying Specialist will conduct the investigation. • The investigation must be completed as soon as possible, but no later than 10 days after the Director of Education (or his/her designee) received the initial written report of the incident.
- The school board must receive the reports along with information on actions taken to address the incident(s).
- Parents of student(s) involved in the incident are entitled to information about the investigation and may request a hearing with the school board in its executive session.
- The Board of Trustees may also hear from the HIB Coordinator at the hearing.
- At its next meeting, the school board must issue a written decision affirming, rejecting, or modifying the Director of Education's (or his/her designee) decision. The board's decision may be appealed to the commissioner.

EMPOWERMENT ACADEMY HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION AND BULLYING (HIB) POLICY

The Board of Empowerment Academy Charter School prohibits acts of harassment, intimidation or bullying by or toward any students or school community members.

A safe and civil environment in school is necessary for students to learn and achieve high academic standards. "Harassment, intimidation or bullying" is defined as any gesture or written, verbal or physical act, or any use of electronic or wireless communication (including telephone, cell phone, computer, or pager) whether it be a single incident or a series of incidents, that is reasonably perceived as being motivated either by any actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or a mental, physical or sensory disability, or by any other distinguishing characteristic, that takes place on school grounds, at any school sponsored function or on a school bus, or off school grounds, in accordance with law, that substantially disrupts or interferes with the orderly operation of the school or the rights of other students, and that:

- A. A reasonable person should know, under the circumstances, will have the effect of physically or emotionally harming a student or damaging the student's property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of physical or emotional harm to his/her person or damage to his/her property; or*
- B. Has the effect of insulting or demeaning any student or group of students; **OR***
- C. Creates a hostile educational environment for the student by interfering with the student's education or by severely or pervasively causing physical or emotional harm to the student.*
- D. Bullying is an unwanted aggressive behavior that may involve a real or perceived power imbalance.*
- E. Consequences for a student who commits an act of harassment, intimidation, or bullying shall be varied and graded based on a variety of factors, including the developmental age and maturity levels of the parties involved, the levels of harm, the nature of the behaviors, past incidences or past or continuing patterns of behavior and performance, and the relationships between the parties involved. Consequences for students who commit acts of harassment, intimidation or bullying may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion. Remedial actions for individual students who commit such acts may include a behavioral assessment or evaluation and/or supportive interventions and referral services. Consequences and/or remedial actions for a staff member who commits an act of harassment, intimidation, or bullying shall be disciplined in accordance with school policies, procedures, and agreements.*
- F. School leadership is responsible for receiving complaints alleging violations of this policy. All school employees are required to report alleged violations of this policy to school leadership. All other members of the school community, including students, parents, volunteers and visitors, are encouraged to report any act that may be a violation of this policy. School leadership, including the Head Dean or the Head of Dean's designee, is responsible for determining whether an alleged act constitutes a violation of this policy. In so doing, school leadership shall conduct a prompt, thorough and complete investigation of the alleged incident for any report of policy violations and complaints.*

G. Any request by the parents or guardians for a hearing before the district board of education concerning the written information about an HIB investigation, shall be filed with the district board of education secretary no later than 60 calendar days after the written information is received by the parents or guardians

Response to an Incident of Harassment, Intimidation, or Bullying

An appropriate response will be provided to the individual who commits any incident of harassment, intimidation, or bullying. Some acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying may be isolated incidents requiring the school to respond appropriately to the individual(s) committing the acts. Other acts may be so serious or part of a larger pattern of harassment, intimidation, or bullying that require a response either at the classroom, school building, school district level or by law enforcement officials.

The policy and/or family handbook describes the range of ways in which a school responds once an incident of harassment, intimidation, or bullying is identified. The policy establishes that the range of responses must include an appropriate combination of: counseling, support services, intervention services and other programs.

The policy requires the Director of Education (or designee) in conjunction with the school anti-bullying specialist, to appropriately apply the range of ways in which a school will respond once an incident of harassment, intimidation, or bullying is identified.

Consequences and appropriate remedial actions for pupils who commit an act of harassment, intimidation, or bullying range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion, as permitted under N.J.S.A. 18A:37-1, Discipline of Pupils and as set forth in N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.2, Short-term Suspensions, N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.3, Long-term Suspensions, and N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.5, Expulsions.

In considering whether a response beyond the individual level is appropriate, the administrator will consider the nature and circumstances of the act, the level of harm, the nature of the behavior, past incidents, or past or continuing patterns of behavior, and the context in which the alleged incident(s) occurred.

Empowerment Academy's response can range from school and community surveys, to mailings, to focus groups, to adoption of research-based bullying prevention program models, to training for certificated and non-certificated staff. The school's responses may also include participation of parent(s) or legal guardian (s) and other community members and organizations, to small or large group presentations for fully addressing the actions and our response to the actions in the context of acceptable pupil and staff member behavior and the consequences of such actions and involvement of law enforcement officers, including school resource officers. The school will also make resources available to individual victims of harassment, intimidation, and bullying, including but not limited to school counseling services and environmental modifications.

Reprisal or Retaliation Prohibited

Empowerment Academy prohibits reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of harassment, intimidation, or bullying. The consequence and appropriate remedial action for a person who engages in reprisal or retaliation shall be determined by the Director of Education (or designee) after consideration of the nature and circumstances of the act, in accordance with case law, Federal and

State statutes and regulations and district policies and procedures. The consequences for employees will range from an admonishment to termination of employment.

The consequences for a volunteer will range from an admonishment to dismissal from the volunteer position.

Consequences for False Accusation

Empowerment prohibits any person from falsely accusing another as a means of harassment, intimidation, or bullying. Consequences and appropriate remedial action for a pupil found to have falsely accused another as a means of harassment, intimidation, or bullying range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion, as permitted under N.J.S.A. 18A:37-1 et seq., Discipline of Pupils and as set forth in N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.2, Short term Suspensions, N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7, Long-term Suspensions and N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.5, Expulsions.

Consequences and appropriate remedial action for a school employee found to have falsely accused another as a means of harassment, intimidation, or bullying shall be disciplined in accordance with district policies and procedures, and agreements.

Consequences and appropriate remedial action for a visitor or volunteer found to have falsely accused another as a means of harassment, intimidation, or bullying shall be determined by the Director of Education (or designee), after consideration of the nature, severity, and circumstances of the act, which may include a report to appropriate law enforcement officials.

Policy Publication

This Policy will be disseminated annually to all school staff, pupils, parent(s) or legal guardian(s), along with a statement explaining that the policy applies to all applicable acts of harassment, intimidation, and bullying that occur on school property, at school-sponsored functions or on a school bus. The Director of Education (or designee) shall ensure notice of this policy appears in any publication of the school that sets forth the comprehensive rules, procedures, and standards for schools within the school, and in any pupil handbook that includes the pupil code of conduct. This notice shall also indicate the school's Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying Policy is available on the school's website. The policy requires the name, school phone number, school address, and school email address of both the school anti-bullying specialist and the school district coordinator to be listed on the homepage of the school's website.

Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying Prevention Programs

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:37-17. (5) c, and N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.9(d) 1.i, information regarding the school's harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying Policy shall be incorporated into a school's employee training program.

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.9(d)3, the school is required to annually review the extent and characteristics of harassment, intimidation, and bullying behavior in the schools of the school and implement locally determined programmatic or other responses, if determined appropriate by the school.

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.9(d)1, the school is required to annually review the training needs of staff

for the effective implementation of the harassment, intimidation, and bullying policy, procedures, programs, and initiatives of the school and implement locally determined staff training programs consistent with the annual review of training needs and the findings of the annual review and update of the code of pupil conduct, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.1(a)3, as determined appropriate by the School Board.

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.9(d)2, the school is required to develop a process for annually discussing Empowerment's Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying Policy with pupils.

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:37-15.1, this Policy shall be transmitted to the Executive County Chief School Administrator.

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:37-19, the school district may apply to the Commissioner of Education for additional costs due to the implementation of the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:37-13 through N.J.S.A. 18A:37-18.

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:37-15.3 There are provisions for appropriate responses to HIB that occur off school grounds, in cases where a school employee is made aware of actions.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips are an important part of the curriculum at Empowerment Academy and each class is expected to have a number of trips during the year. All parents should have signed a release for walking trips in Jersey City and other communities in New Jersey before the school year begins. A permission slip must be signed for each trip involving transportation or your scholar will not be able to participate. Notices and permission slips will be sent home before each field trip. Please return these forms in a timely manner. Hand written letters may not be accepted as a form of granting permission for a field trip.

Rules of safety and behavioral expectations are discussed with scholars and adults before every field trip. Children who are not able to follow directions, follow behavioral expectations as outlined in this handbook, complete their Life's Work regularly, have financial balances, or are unable to follow basic rules of safety will not be eligible to participate. Students are still expected to come to school on the day of the trip and will be placed in other classrooms for the day.

Chaperoning a Field Trip

The primary responsibility of chaperones is to assist the teacher. This means knowing, in advance, what kind of help the teacher will need. This usually includes keeping track of the scholars, keeping scholars involved in the slated activities, and making sure scholars listen and are polite when someone is talking.

You may be required to attend a Chaperone Meeting with the Director of Education (or designee) if you plan to chaperone. We ask that you pay full attention to the students during field trips and limit cell phone use. We also ask that you ride the school bus, when appropriate, in order to help supervise the scholars.

TRANSPORTATION

Empowerment Academy offers free bus transportation to and from school as a ***privilege***, not as a core part of its school program. Scholars shall ride their assigned bus as well as board and disembark at their assigned stops only. Any changes in these assignments must be approved in writing by school transportation staff who will inform the bus driver(s) of the change. Due to capacity limits and route organization, changes may or may not be possible. Any request for changes from parents may take up to 7 working days for confirmation/take effect.

Scholars are required to follow the rules and regulations of riding a public school bus. The driver of a school bus shall have complete authority over and responsibility for the operation of the bus and maintaining good conduct upon the bus. The student Code of Conduct, as published in this handbook, also applies to students on the bus. The driver or any bus attendants shall report any misconduct or violations to school administrators. Use of cell phones and electronic devices on the school bus is prohibited. If you opt to send your child to school with a phone and/or electronic device, please note that the school is not liable should they go missing. If you opt to send your child on the bus with a phone, it must be turned off and placed/remain inside the scholar's backpack. If a bus aide or bus driver sees a cell phone/electronic device, they have the authority to confiscate the item and give it to a school leader. A parent/guardian will have to retrieve the item from the school in person.

The Director of Education (or his/her designee) may take action on any misconduct, which occurs on a school bus, the same as if the violation had occurred on school grounds. Bus consequences for scholar misconduct are different from school consequences for scholar misconduct.

Scholars who fail to comply with the rules may be temporarily and/or permanently barred from receiving bus service, if the violation warrants. If your scholar is temporarily barred from the bus, the expectation is that you will transport your child to and from school each day that he/she is not permitted to ride the bus. Your child is still subject to our attendance policy despite the circumstances.

Dismissal at school is an intricate process. If your child rides the bus, they will neither dismiss at the same time nor in the same way as pick up students. Please do not expect nor attempt to arbitrarily pick up your child, who is a bus student, in the same manner that a typical non-bus student would be picked up. In the event that you would like to pick up your child versus having them ride the bus, you must make arrangements to do so by **emailing uesbus@empacad.org and/or calling the main office no later than 11:00 am on the day**. A handwritten note or email to your child's teacher will not be accepted.

If you arrive at the school to pick up your bus student at dismissal and you have not indicated that your child will not be taking the bus, your child will not be outside waiting for you. You will have to wait until all pick-up children have been dismissed. At that time, you will have the opportunity to safely sign out your child and take them home. To avoid this delay, please be sure to follow our dismissal procedure noted above.

Please note that THREE (3) or more pick-ups of your bus student may result in termination of services as we do not reserve seats for students who are not riding the bus consistently.

LUNCH PROGRAM

Scholars may bring their lunches to school in labeled lunch boxes or paper bags. We do not

provide refrigeration, microwaves, utensils, or cups. Please include everything your child will need when the lunch is packed. We ask that you do not pack glass containers/bottles and non-plastic utensils for the safety of your child and others.

The trading of lunch items among scholars is strictly prohibited. Many children have serious allergies and sharing food can be a dangerous health risk to our community. With that stated, please make certain that you communicate all of your child's allergies to teachers AND the school nurse. Most importantly, your child's food allergies should be noted on their health form submitted at the start of the academic year. Empowerment Academy is a nut free school. Thus, peanuts and products containing peanuts are prohibited for consumption on school premises.

Non-permissible Food Items

Please do not drop off fast food lunch to your child. Carbonated beverages, candy, and other items containing excessive sugar (13g or more) are not considered nutritious. It takes constant awareness on everyone's part to help scholars develop healthy eating habits. We ask that you be health conscious when preparing your scholar's lunch. Please note that our staff may restrict or confiscate any of the prohibited items mentioned above. A supplemental lunch will be provided, at the family's expense, if needed. **Gum is not permitted in school or on the bus at any time.**

Scholars who purchase school lunch must bring their money daily or be registered online. Teachers will not keep track of any money on a weekly or monthly basis. Please send your child with an envelope or baggie clearly marked "LUNCH MONEY" along with the child's name. If you sign up online, please be sure to keep track of low balances and/or amounts due to avoid any issues. Please note that if you have an unpaid balance, your child may receive an alternate lunch and/or may become ineligible to participate in field trips or other school privileges until the balance has been paid. In the event that the unpaid balance becomes excessive, we may ask that you pack a lunch for your child daily.

Food deliveries to the school, specifically from services like Uber Eats. To ensure the safety and well-being of our students, we do not allow food deliveries from any external sources to be made directly to the school during school hours for students. This policy is in place to prevent disruptions to the learning environment and to maintain security on campus. Parents can provide packed lunches from home or utilize our school lunch program, which offers a variety of nutritious meal options.

As a Title 1 school, scholars may be eligible for free or reduced lunch. To determine if you qualify for such services, please be sure to complete the lunch application upon receipt.

All families will be required to fill out the application, even if they do not wish to receive free lunch or purchase one as the application process helps our school to qualify/receive federal aid.

CELL PHONES AND ELECTRONICS

Scholars are not permitted to have electronic devices, of any kind, in school. If your scholar brings an electronic device (including cell phones), they must be powered off completely and placed in the designated bin for their homeroom. (i.e. lock box). Electronic devices include but are not limited to:

- hand-held games
- portable stereos
- cell phones
- unapproved tablet or laptop
- smart watches
- headphones/airpods
- or any other new technology deemed to fit this category

None of these devices are needed and often present a distraction to learning and/or social emotional well being of scholars while at school. In addition, these items may cause conflict and lead to grief when lost or stolen. While Empowerment Academy, obviously, strives to prevent theft of any item, the school will not endeavor to track down cell phones/electronic devices that should not be in school in the first place. Should you choose to send a cell phone/electronic device to school with your child despite our policy, we are not liable for lost or stolen items. Scholars must turn in their devices upon arrival at security. If a scholar is caught with a cell phone/electronic device at any point of the day before they are returned, the device will be confiscated and the scholar will receive 1 day Out of School Suspension for technology violation.. In the event of multiple infractions, the cell phone/electronic device will be confiscated and you will be required to pick up the device from the DOS in person.

We do understand the importance of parent communication with children after school hours, especially if the scholar is permitted to walk home alone. However, please call the main office if there is an emergency or a need to communicate with your child during school hours.

Empowerment Academy reserves the right to make necessary adjustments to our cell phone use policy at our discretion. For example, we may allow for scholars to use a cell phone to listen to music only while riding the bus home from school. This would require that the scholar continue to have their cell phone in their backpack as they use it for this purpose. If it is seen being used for any other purpose (i.e. playing video games or watching videos), the student will be subject to the cell phone/electronic device as noted above.

INTERNET AND COMPUTER USE POLICY

The Empowerment Academy Charter School computer network is provided for scholars to conduct research, complete assignments and tests. Access to network services is given to scholars who agree to act in a considerate and responsible manner. Access is a privilege—not a right – and entails responsibility. A comprehensive Acceptable Use Policy is attached to this Handbook (Appendix E).

Scholars are responsible for good behavior using any and all technology, just as they are in a classroom or school hallway. Computer network storage (hard drives and personal folders) may be treated like school lockers. Network administrators and teachers may review files and communications to maintain system integrity and ensure that users are using the system responsibly. The following misuses of the computer system are not permitted:

- Sending and/or displaying hateful or pornographic messages or pictures Using abusive, threatening or inappropriate language
- Harassing, insulting or attacking others
- Engaging in or promoting violence

- Engaging in racial, gender, or other slurs
- Receiving or transmitting information pertaining to weapons, such as bombs, automatic weapons, illicit firearms or explosive devices
- Damaging technology equipment (computer systems, computer networks, TVs, VCRs, digital cameras, scanners, etc.)
- Violating copyright laws (copying internet or other materials without permission) ● Using others' passwords
- Trespassing in other scholars and/or teachers' folders, work, or files
- Intentionally wasting limited resources
- Employing the computer network for commercial purposes
- Transmitting personal information without written parental consent
- Accessing areas considered borderline without written parental consent
- Hacking (attempt to gain unauthorized access to files, folders, and/or other systems)
- Bypassing school imposed firewalls or accessing restricted websites/content

All scholar internet usage is monitored and managed with our electronic monitoring systems.

Violations will result in loss of computer use and/or other disciplinary or legal action as appropriate.

HOLIDAYS

A central strength of Empowerment Academy is the diversity of its members. To protect and maintain this diversity, Empowerment Academy does not celebrate religious holidays in the course of the school year, nor are holidays used to drive the curriculum, but the observance by scholars of religious holidays are grounds for an excused absence. Moreover, religion and cultures may be appropriately explored as part of the curriculum and in response to children's questions. Children and parents are encouraged to share/discuss their particular customs, traditions, foods, and songs with the class and teachers. Any community meetings held around holidays will be of a secular nature.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Scholars are permitted to bring and share individually wrapped store-bought goodies with classmates, only if the teacher is notified at least 24 hours in advance of the celebration. The treats must already be prepared in individual servings and cannot consist of CANDY and/or NUTS as already indicated in our lunch program policy. Please be sure to prepare one treat per student in the classroom so that all scholars in the classroom can receive one. Birthday celebrations shall not occur during instructional time and are to be scheduled at the teacher's convenience. Please contact your scholar's teacher prior to planning a celebration as, oftentimes, teachers will schedule monthly or weekly birthday celebrations for the class. To avoid the transmission of germs, unnecessarily, any items that are not store bought and individually wrapped will not be served. They will be sent home with your child.

Birthday treats should be able to be quickly served and easily clean. All required materials (i.e. plates, napkins, utensils) must be provided by parents as they will not be provided by the school. Ice cream treats are acceptable but must be individually wrapped in order to be served. Decorations, of any kind, are not permitted (especially helium balloons). Please do send any as they will not be used. Please note that parents are not required to send birthday treats to school and

we are not required to serve birthday treats if sent in. We will use our discretion in all cases when determining if treats sent to school will be served and/or distributed. Lastly, being that we strive for an inclusive learning environment, we will not allow for any invitations for an out of school birthday party/celebration to be distributed at school unless everyone in your child's homeroom is receiving one. If a scholar brings in any invitations, they will be returned home with the scholars. Teachers and/or staff members will not assist in distribution of such invitations.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Board of Trustees meets monthly to discharge its fiduciary and oversight duties as per New Jersey Law. Parents are represented on the Board of Trustees and all parents are invited to attend the meetings as they are open to the public. Please contact the school and/or review the school's website for meeting dates and times.

WHO-TO-GO-TO FOR WHAT

Empowerment Academy Info Sheet

Updated for the SY 2024-2025

KEY CONTACTS	GO TO FOR
Below you will find the contact information for key members of our staff. If you are seeking to speak with a teacher, please contact the main office of the respective building in which your child attends. MS Main Office: 201-975-4299	
Classroom Teacher- to contact your child's classroom teacher, please email them directly. This will yield the quickest response. You can also leave a message with the main office for a return call. However, please note that teachers are not permitted to respond to phone calls during instruction. He/she will respond to an email or call within 24 hours of receiving the communication.	<i>Your scholar's teacher should be your first point of contact for all questions and concerns pertaining to academics and/or behavior.</i>
<u>MS Office Manager</u> Name: Ms. Severino Email: aseverino@empacad.org	Performs but is not limited to performing the following duties: ➤ Questions related to general operations (i.e. attendance, lunch, school calendar, before/after care) ➤ Acceptance and relaying of messages to teachers, staff, and administration

Registrar and Transportation Coordinator Name: Ms. Chan Email: enroll@empacad.org	Performs but is not limited to performing the following duties: ➤ Questions related to school registration and enrollment ➤ Questions related to student forms (i.e. walk home, permission slips) ➤ Coordination of school visits ➤ Coordination of/troubleshoot matters pertaining to bus transportation ➤ Update and revise parent contact information
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Director of Operations Name: Mr. Seetaram Email: bseetaram@empacad.org	Performs but is not limited to performing the following duties: ➤ Questions related to facilities and school security
MS School Nurse Name: Nurse Thinsley Email: vtinsley@empacad.org	Performs but is not limited to performing the following duties: ➤ Questions related to student health forms, records, and documentation ➤ Prepare and coordinate materials for field trips ➤ Ensure communication about student health and health needs to families ➤ Attend field trips (if applicable) ➤ Verify doctor's notes due to illness
Special Education Coordinator Name: Ms. Cohen Email: lcohen@empacad.org	Performs but is not limited to performing the following duties: ➤ Coordinate Child Study Team Meetings ➤ Maintain all documents pertaining to Special Education and related services (i.e. IEP, 504 plans) ➤ Spearheads and responds to all questions pertaining to Special Education and related services

MS Dean of Students (Grades 5/6) Name: Mr. Keitt Email: KKeitt@empacad.org MS Dean of Students (Grades 7/8) Name: Mr. Davis Email: SDavis@empacad.org	Performs but is not limited to performing the following duties: ➤ Responds to all inquiries pertaining to student culture, discipline, and/or student behavior ➤ Coordinates School Climate and Culture events/ initiatives ➤ Facilitates re-entry meetings post suspensions ➤ Responds to inquiries pertaining to ➤ Recess/Lunch/Student Schedules ➤ Responds to inquiries pertaining to the Family Handbook ➤ Participates in the HIB processes and procedures ➤ Participates in truancy processes and procedures ➤ Facilitates re-entry meetings post suspensions
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MS Social Worker Name: Ms. Browne Email: kbrowne@empacad.org MS Social Worker Name: Ms. Lopez Email: YLopez@empacad.org	Performs but is not limited to performing the following duties: ➤ Provides student counseling and related family services ➤ Responds to inquiries pertaining to student counseling and related service ➤ Responds to inquiries and participates in the Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB) process ➤ Responds to inquiries pertaining to Social Emotional Learning ➤ Spearheads student crises pertaining to mental health (i.e. school protocols)
MS School Counselor Name: Ms. Clinton Email: mclinton@empacad.org	Performs but is not limited to performing the following duties: ➤ Provides counseling and guidance support to students ➤ Provides social and emotional support to students

MS Guidance Counselor Name: Ms. Plantyn Email: zplantyn@empacad.org	Performs but is not limited to performing the following duties: ➤ Assist and advise students about academic and personal decisions
MS Academy Dean (Math/Science) Name: Mr. Pankiewicz Email: spankiewicz@empacad.org MS Academy Dean (ELA/Social Studies) Name: Ms. Paludi Email: apaludi@empacad.org	Performs but is not limited to performing the following duties: ➤ Instructional support for teachers and staff members ➤ Teacher feedback and coaching
MS Data & Assessment Coordinator Name: Ms. Elbery Email: selbery@empacad.org	Performs but is not limited to performing the following duties: ➤ Create data reports and analyses for teachers, leaders, the board of trustees and other stakeholders. ➤ Manage school data systems ➤ Prepare and Administer all school assessments
MS Principal Name: Mrs. Powell Email: lpowell@empacad.org	Performs but is not limited to performing the following duties: ➤ Oversees the efficiency of day to day operations for Grades 5-8 ➤ Oversees the implementation and effectiveness of the academic program(s) for Grades 5-8 ➤ Responds to inquiries pertaining to Academy Dean concerns ➤ Responds to inquiries pertaining to overall student health and safety concerns

Title I Parent Involvement Policy and Parent-School Compact for Empowerment Academy Charter School

Section I: Title I Parent Involvement Policy

Educational research shows a positive correlation between effective parental involvement and student achievement. The overall aim of this policy is to develop a parent involvement program that will ensure effective involvement of parents and community in our school. Therefore, Empowerment Academy Charter School, *required by section 1118(a)(2) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) (district wide parental involvement policy)*, is responsible for creating and implementing a parent involvement policy to strengthen the connection and support of student achievement between our school and the families. Empowerment Academy Charter School policy is designed to keep parents informed by actively involving them in planning and decision-making in support of the education of their children. Parents are encouraged to actively participate on the PTO, and Title I Parent Advisory Council, as trained volunteers and welcomed members of our school community. Empowerment Academy Charter School will support parents and families of Title I students by:

1. Providing materials and training to help parents work with their children to improve their achievement level (e.g., literacy, math and use of technology);
2. Providing parents with the information and training needed to effectively become involved in planning and decision making in support of the education of their children;
3. Fostering a caring and effective home-school partnership to ensure that parents can effectively support and monitor their child's progress;
4. Providing assistance to parents in understanding City, State and Federal standards and assessments;
5. Sharing information about school and parent related programs, meetings and other activities in a format, and in languages that parents can understand;
6. Providing professional development opportunities for school staff with the assistance of parents to improve outreach, communication skills and cultural competency in order to build stronger ties between parents and other members of our school community.

Empowerment Academy Charter School's Parent Involvement Policy was designed based upon a careful assessment of the needs of all parents/guardians, including parents/guardians of English Language Learners and students with disabilities. Our school community will conduct an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of this parent involvement policy with Title I parents to improve the academic quality of our school with the Title 1 Parent Advisory Council. The findings of the evaluation through school surveys and feedback forms will be used to design strategies to more effectively meet the needs of parents, and enhance the school's Title I program. This information will be maintained by the school. To increase and improve parent involvement and school quality, Empowerment Academy Community Charter will:

- Actively involve and engage parents in the planning, review and evaluation of the

effectiveness of the school's Title I program including the implementation of the school's Title I Parent Involvement Policy;

- Engage parents in discussion and decisions regarding the required Title I set-aside funds, which are allocated directly to schools to promote parent involvement, including family literacy and parenting skills;
- Ensure that the Title I funds allocated for parent involvement are utilized to implement activities and strategies as described in our Parent Involvement Plan;
- Maintain a Parent Coordinator (or a dedicated staff person(s)) to serve as a liaison between the school and families. The Parent Coordinator or a dedicated staff person(s) will provide parent workshops based on the assessed needs of the parents of children who attend our school and will work to ensure that our school environment is welcoming and inviting to all parents. The Parent Coordinator will also maintain a log of events and activities planned for parents each month for school reporting purposes. The parent coordinator may provide the following services through the year;
- Conduct parent workshops with topics that may include: parenting skills, understanding educational accountability grade-level curriculum and assessment expectations; literacy, accessing community and support services; and technology training to build parents' capacity to help their children at home;
- Provide opportunities for parents to help them understand the accountability system (e.g., ESEA/State accountability system, student proficiency levels, Annual School Report Card, Progress Report)
- Host the required Title I Parent Annual Meeting on or before December 1st of each school year to advise parents of children participating in the Title I program about the school's Title I funded program(s), their right to be involved in the program and the parent involvement requirements under Title I, Part A, Section 1118 and other applicable sections under the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)*;
- Schedule additional parent meetings (e.g., trimester meetings, with flexible times, such as meetings in the morning or evening, to share information about the school's educational program and other initiatives and allow parents to provide suggestions;
- Translate all critical school documents and provide interpretation during meetings and events as needed.

Empowerment Academy Charter School will further encourage school-level parental involvement by:

- Hosting educational family events/activities throughout the school year;
- Encouraging meaningful parent participation on School Leadership Teams, PTO or Title I Parent Advisory Council;
- Developing a plan for future events to support, men asserting leadership in education for their children. parents/guardians, grandparents and foster parents;
- Encouraging more parents to engage as school volunteers;
- Providing written and verbal progress reports that are periodically given to keep parents informed of their children's progress;
- Monthly provide parents with updates in the school newsletter of events and information. Providing school planners/folders/mailings for regular written communication between teacher and the home in a format, and to the extent practicable in the languages that parents can understand.

Section II: School-Parent Compact

Empowerment Academy Charter School, [in compliance with the Section 1118 of Title I, Part A of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)*] is developing a School-Parent Compact to strengthen the connection and support of student achievement between the school and the families. Empowerment Academy Charter School staff and the parents of students participating in activities and programs funded by Title I, agree that this Compact will outline how parents, the entire school staff and students will share responsibility for improved academic achievement and the means by which a school-parent partnership will be developed to ensure that all children achieve State Standards and Assessments.

School Responsibilities:

- Provide high quality curriculum and instruction consistent with State Standards to enable participating children to meet the State's Standards and Assessments by:
 - Using academic learning time efficiently;
 - Implementing a curriculum aligned to State Standards;
 - Offering high quality instruction in all content areas; and providing instruction by highly qualified teachers and when this does not occur, notifying parents as required by the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)*.
- Support home-school relationships and improve communication by;
 - Conducting parent-teacher conferences during the school year which the individual child's achievement will be discussed;
- Convening a Title I Parent Annual Meeting (prior to December 1st of each school year) for parents of students participating in the Title I program to inform them of the school's Title I status and funded programs and their right to be involved;
- Arranging additional meetings at other flexible times (e.g., morning, evening) and providing (if necessary and funds are available) transportation, child care or home visits for those parents who cannot attend a regular meeting;
- Respecting the rights of limited English proficient families to receive translated documents and interpretation services in order to ensure participation in the child's education; • Involving parents in the planning process to review, evaluate and improve the existing Title I programs, Parent Involvement Policy and this Compact;
- Arranging opportunities for parents to receive training to volunteer and participate in their child's class, and to observe classroom activities;
- Advising parents of their right to file a complaint under the Department's General Complaint Procedures and consistent with the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)* and Title I programs;

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities:

- Monitor my child's attendance and ensure that my child arrives to school on time as well as follow the appropriate procedures to inform the school when my child is absent; Ensure that my child comes to school rested by setting a schedule for bedtime based on the needs of my child and his/her age;
- Check and assist my child in completing homework tasks, when necessary; Actively support increased study habits developed for long term student learning and achievement; Read to my child and/or discuss what my child is reading each day (for a minimum of 15 minutes)
- Promote positive use of extracurricular time such as, extended day learning opportunities, clubs, team sports and/or quality family time;
- Encourage my child to follow school rules and regulations and discuss this compact with

my child;

- Volunteer in my child's school or assist from my home as time permits;
- Participate, as appropriate, in the decisions relating to my child's education. I will also: Communicate with my child's teacher about educational needs and stay informed about their education by prompting reading and responding to all notices received from the school or district;
- Respond to surveys, feedback forms and notices when requested;
- Become involved in the development, implementation, evaluation and revision to the Parent Involvement Policy and this Compact;
- Take part in the school's PTO or serve to the extent possible on advisory groups (e.g., school Title I Parent Advisory Councils,)
- Share responsibility for the improved academic achievement of my child.

Student Responsibilities:

- Attend school regularly and arrive on time;
- Complete my homework and submit all assignments on time;
- Follow the school rules and be responsible for my actions;
- Show respect for myself, other people and property;
- Try to resolve disagreements or conflicts peacefully;
- Always try my best to learn

Appendix B:

Admissions Policy

Beginning October 15th of the preceding the intended school year of enrollment, applications will be accepted. The initial application period will end on January 7th of the preceding school year. If, on January 7th, fewer applications have been submitted for a grade than there are seats available, Empowerment Academy Charter School will admit all New Jersey-resident, grade-eligible children for which an application has been completed. Thereafter, the application period will end on February 15th of the preceding school year.

Subsequent application periods will end on the 1st of each following month. At the end of each application period, Empowerment Academy Charter School will admit all New Jersey-resident children for which an application has been completed, provided that the applicant submits proof of age and residence, to the extent that there are seats available in the applicable grade. If an application is submitted after an end date, during which more applications were submitted for a grade than there are seats available, returning students will always be given the highest preference. Children with siblings already enrolled will receive the second highest preference. Jersey-City resident children who do not have siblings already enrolled will receive the third highest preference. Non-Jersey City-resident students without a sibling enrolled will not receive any preference.

A sibling is defined as a biological or legally adopted brother or sister residing in the same household. Children who are under the legal guardianship of a parent of an enrolled student and living in the same household may also be entitled to the sibling preference as determined by the administrator in his/her sole discretion. Cousins, nieces, nephews and unrelated children sharing

an address with the applicant are **not** considered siblings.

The names of applicants for a grade who are not able to be admitted because of a lack of seats will be assigned a position on one of two wait lists – one for Jersey City-resident children and one for non-Jersey City-resident children – ordered through a random drawing of applicant numbers. If any seats in that grade become available for the subsequent school year, children on the Jersey City-resident waitlist for that grade will be offered an opportunity to fill the seat based upon their position on the Jersey City-resident waitlist. Only after all of the children on the Jersey City resident wait list have been offered an opportunity to fill available seats, will the non-Jersey City resident waitlist be used, with opportunities presented to the children on that list according to their order on it.

If a student, who is offered a seat from either wait list, has a sibling on a waitlist, that sibling shall go to the top of all wait lists for his/her grade level, immediately behind any other sibling already at the top of the list waiting for a seat to open.

If a seat becomes available in a grade level where there is no wait list, the administrator may, in his/her sole discretion, offer a seat to a child on the waitlist for another grade level if there is space in the school in accordance with the overall enrollment count.

Admission lotteries at Empowerment Academy Charter School will be public and the families of children who have applied will be invited to attend. Each applicant will have been assigned a number. This number will have been recorded on a card, together with the grade the child is applying to enter, the child's city of residence, a notice of whether any sibling is already enrolled for the upcoming year, and the applicant number/grade of any sibling(s) applying to enroll. Each such card will have been placed into a grade and preference-specific drum. The drum will have been ordered by grade and preference, beginning with the highest preference drum for Kindergarten, then the second highest preference, etc., and then moving on to the highest preference drum for First Grade, then to the second highest preference, etc., up through the school's various grade levels. The school will have enlisted an impartial community leader to draw the cards in each drum at the random admission drawing, and will have invited a representative of the Jersey City School District to observe the proceedings and ensure fairness. The school will record students' applicant numbers in the order they are drawn to create grade-level admission/wait lists. When a child's card is drawn who has a sibling applying, the drawn child's number will be recorded on the appropriate grade level list, and then immediately following, the sibling's number will be recorded on the appropriate grade level list. Should it turn out that there is insufficient space for that child or his or her sibling in a grade, the child for whom there is space will be admitted and the child for whom there is no space will stay on the waitlist for the relevant grade level. The name of any student whose application is received after the end of an application period for which a random drawing has been conducted will be placed at the end of the relevant (Jersey City resident or non-Jersey City resident) wait list created by that random drawing in the order the application was received.

The school will notify the parents/guardians of applicants about their child's admissions status – admitted or wait-listed – using phone calls/email and will document all efforts for outreach.

Waitlist Procedures

If a seat becomes available to be filled from the waitlist, the school will go through the list, in order, and make at least three attempts to notify an applicant's parents/guardians. If, after three

attempts, the school has not been able to confirm that a wait-listed student will be attending, the seat will be offered to the next applicant on the waitlist.

As part of the admission drawing and wait list process, parents/guardians will be notified that the wait lists so created will be used only for filling seats that are open or become open for the subsequent school year. This notice will establish that if a seat does not become available for the subsequent school year, parents/guardians will need to reapply to have their child's name placed in the applicant pool for any school year thereafter. A wait list will only be maintained for the period between its creation following a random admission drawing for the subsequent school year and the close of that subsequent school year.

Appendix C:

Grievance Committee

The grievance committee is composed of both parents and staff members as a liaison to the Board of Trustees. It is designed to resolve issues related to students, staff, parents, and the Board of Trustees. A grievance form must be completed and will be reviewed by the committee within 10 days, providing a resolution or recommendation to the Board of Trustees. Grievance forms may be requested in the Main Office at the respective campus your child attends.

Grievance Procedure

The Board of Trustees and School Leaders work hard to provide a productive learning environment for our children and create a productive and fulfilling working environment for our teachers. Toward that end all members of the school community are encouraged to work together to resolve conflicts between the parties where possible. **Therefore, this form is only to be used after you have attempted to resolve the conflict first.** We encourage you to reach out to the staff member or School Leader, in advance, in an attempt to resolve the conflict. In the event of a problem or dispute with other personnel, students, parents or the administration that cannot be resolved, the following grievance procedure is provided as means to resolve such disputes for the benefit of the entire school community. Parties may submit a written complaint following the process described below. In order to ensure expeditious and efficient handling of your grievance please follow all directions carefully as well as provide any pertinent attachments.

The employee/parents will make a good faith effort to work with the teacher/appropriate staff member to resolve conflicts. This effort will consist of identification of the problem, possible solutions, selection of a resolution, implementation of resolution, and scheduling a follow-up. In the event that the complaint involves the immediate supervisor/teacher, the employee/parent will work with that individual's supervisor.

If the issue is not resolved after a good faith attempt as outlined above, the employee/parent may submit the grievance in writing to the Principal and/or Director of Education within five (5) working days of the failed attempt to resolve the incident.

1. The Principal and/or Director Education has five (5) working days to review and respond to any grievance matters.
2. In the event that the party submitting the grievance is dissatisfied with the Principal and/or Director of Education's response, he/she may request the review and response

- from the Grievance Committee.
3. The party submitting the grievance has five (5) working days to appeal the decision of the Grievance Committee to the Board's Grievance Committee.
 4. If the grievance includes the Director of Education, the grievance should be submitted in a sealed envelope and placed in the Board of Trustees/Secretary mailbox at the school, **skipping steps 2-4.**
 5. Within one week of receipt of the written complaint, the Grievance Committee shall schedule a hearing at a mutually convenient time and place for discussion of the complaint with all parties involved. This process is similar to that of the initial good faith attempt at a resolution.
 6. A decision shall be rendered in writing within ten (10) working days at the completion of the hearing process.
 7. The party submitting the grievance has five (5) working days to appeal the decision of the Grievance Committee, in writing, to the Board of Trustees.
 8. If any member(s) of the Grievance Committee has a conflict of interest in the subject of proceedings or are involved in the issue personally, those members shall be excused from their roles on the committee.

Appendix D:

Physical Restraint Policy

Introduction

It is the policy of Empowerment Academy Charter School to promote a safe and productive workplace and educational environment for its employees and students, and to ensure that every student in the district is free from the unreasonable use of physical restraint. Physical restraint shall only be used with extreme caution in emergency situations, after other less intrusive alternatives have failed or been deemed inappropriate.

No person employed or engaged in Empowerment Academy Charter School shall inflict or cause to be inflicted corporal punishment upon a pupil attending such school or institution. However, any such person within the scope of his/her employment may use and apply such amounts of force as is reasonable and necessary (N.J.S.A. 18A:6-1):

- A. To quell a disturbance, threatening physical injury to others;
- B. To obtain possession of weapons or other dangerous objects upon the person or within the control of a pupil;
- C. For the purpose of self-defense; and
- D. For the protection of persons or property.

Any such acts, as described above, shall not be construed to constitute corporal punishment.

Procedures

School personnel shall only administer a physical restraint when it is needed to protect a student

and/or a member of the school community from imminent physical harm. When a physical restraint needs to be administered, school personnel shall seek to prevent movement, and schools should never use a drug or medication to control behavior or minimize any harm to the student as a result of the use of the physical restraint. This policy shall not be construed to limit the protection afforded to publicly funded students under other federal and state laws, including those laws that provide for the rights of students who have been found eligible to receive special education services. Additionally, this policy shall not be construed to preclude any teacher, employee or agent of this public education program from using reasonable force to protect students, other persons or themselves from assault or imminent physical harm.

The Principal and/or Director of Education, in consultation with the Special Education Coordinator and Dean of Students, shall develop written procedures and guidelines related to this policy in accordance with the *Fifteen Principles* established by the United States Department of Education, as per the following:

- A. Every effort should be made to prevent the need for the use of restraint and for the use of seclusion;
- B. Schools should never use mechanical restraints to restrict a child's freedom of movement (except as authorized by a licensed physician or other qualified health professional);
- C. Physical restraint or seclusion should not be used except in situations where the child's behavior poses imminent danger of serious physical harm to self or others and other interventions are ineffective and should be discontinued as soon as imminent danger of serious physical harm to self or others has dissipated;
- D. Policies restricting the use of restraint and seclusion should apply to all children, not just children with disabilities;
- E. Any behavioral intervention must be consistent with the child's rights to be treated with dignity and to be free from abuse;
- F. Restraint or seclusion should never be used as punishment or discipline (e.g., placing in seclusion for out-of-seat behavior), as a means of coercion or retaliation, or as a convenience;
- G. Restraint or seclusion should never be used in a manner that restricts a child's breathing or harms the child;
- H. The use of restraint or seclusion, particularly when there is repeated use for an individual child, multiple uses within the same classroom, or multiple uses by the same individual, should trigger a review and, if appropriate, revision of strategies currently in place to address dangerous behavior; if positive behavioral strategies are not in place, staff should consider developing them;
- I. Behavioral strategies to address dangerous behavior that results in the use of restraint or seclusion should address the underlying cause or purpose of the dangerous behavior;

- J. Teachers and other personnel should be trained regularly on the appropriate use of effective alternative to physical restraint and seclusion, such as positive behavioral interventions and supports and, only for cases involving imminent danger of serious physical harm, on the safe use of physical restraint and seclusion;
- K. Every instance in which restraint or seclusion is used should be carefully and continuously and visually monitored to ensure the appropriateness of its use and safety of the child, other children, teachers, and other personnel;
- L. Parents should be informed of the policies on restraint and seclusion at their child's school or other educational setting, as well as, applicable Federal, State or local laws;
- M. Parents should be notified as soon as possible following each instance in which restraint or seclusion is used with their child;
- N. This policy will be reviewed regularly and updated as appropriate; and 67
- O. Each incident involving the use of restraint or seclusion should be documented in writing and provide for the collection of specific data that would enable teachers, staff, and other personnel to understand and implement the preceding principals.

Definitions

- A. "Physical restraint" is a personal restriction that immobilizes or reduces the ability of a student to move his or her torso, arms, legs, or head freely. The term physical restraint does not include a physical escort;
- B. "Physical escort" means a temporary touching or holding of the hand, wrist, arm, shoulder, or back for the purpose of inducing a student who is acting out to walk to a safe location;
- C. "Extended restraint" shall mean a physical restraint, the duration of which is more than twenty (20) minutes. Extended restraints increase the risk of injury and, therefore, require additional written documentation;
- D. "Mechanical restraint" is the use of any device or equipment to restrict a student's freedom of movement. This term does not include devices implemented by trained school personnel, or utilized by a student that have been prescribed by an appropriate medical (or related services) professional and are used for the specific and approved purpose for which such devices were designed, such as:
 - Adaptive devices or mechanical supports used to achieve proper body position, balance, or alignment to allow greater freedom of mobility than would be possible without the use of such devices or mechanical supports;
 - Vehicle safety restraints when used as intended during the transport of a student in a moving vehicle;
 - Restraints for medical immobilization; or
 - Orthopedically prescribed devices that permit a student to participate in

activities without risk or harm.

- E. “Seclusion restraint” is the voluntary confinement of a student alone in a room or area from which the student is physically prevented from leaving. It does not include a timeout, which is a behavior management technique that is part of an approved program, involves the monitored separation of the student in a non-locked setting, and is implemented for the purpose of calming. The use of a seclusion restraint is expressly prohibited.

Determining When to Use a Physical Restraint

If all other less intrusive alternatives have failed or been deemed inappropriate to prevent student violence, self-injurious behavior and/or de-escalating potentially dangerous behavior occurring among groups of students or with an individual student, a physical restraint may be used.

In other words, a physical restraint can only be used when non-physical interventions would not be effective and the student’s behavior poses a threat of imminent physical harm to himself/herself or others. Any physical restraint shall be limited to the use of such reasonable force as is necessary to protect a student or another member of the school community from assault or imminent physical harm.

Prohibitions on Use of a Physical Restraint

The use of a physical restraint as a means of punishment or as a response to the destruction of property, disruption of school order, a student’s refusal to comply with a school rule or staff directive, or verbal threats that do not constitute a threat of imminent physical harm is expressly prohibited.

Proper Administration of a Physical Restraint

Only trained school personnel shall administer physical restraints. Trained school personnel are those individuals who have received either the in-depth training detailed below, or who have received the required basic training detailed below. Whenever possible, the administration of the physical restraint shall be witnessed by at least one adult who does not participate in the physical restraint. When administering a physical restraint, school personnel shall use only the amount of force necessary to protect the student or others from physical injury.

Additionally, school personnel administering a physical restraint shall use the safest method available and appropriate to the situation in accordance with the safety requirements detailed below, and shall discontinue the restraint as soon as possible. Floor and prone restraints are prohibited unless the school personnel administering the restraint has received in-depth training, and, in the judgment of the trained staff member, such a method is required to provide safety for the student or others present. It should be noted, however, that these training requirements shall not preclude a teacher, employee or agent of the school from using reasonable force to protect students, other persons or themselves from assault or imminent physical harm.

Safety Requirements

No restraints shall be administered in such a way that a student is prevented from breathing or speaking. During the administration of a restraint, school personnel shall continuously monitor the physical status of the student, including skin color and respiration. A restraint shall be immediately released upon a determination by the school personnel administering the restraint that the student is no longer at risk of causing imminent physical harm to himself, herself or others. Additionally, restraints shall be administered in such a way as to prevent or minimize physical harm.

If, at any time during a physical restraint the student demonstrates significant physical distress, the student shall be released from the restraint immediately, and school staff shall take steps to seek medical assistance. School personnel shall review and consider any known medical or psychological limitations and/or behavioral intervention plans regarding the use of physical restraint on an individual student. At any time during the administration of a physical restraint, school personnel may seek to contact the office of special education behavioral specialists, or the crisis intervention team, or take other steps to seek medical assistance if it appears that the student is demonstrating significant physical distress. Any time a physical restraint causes distress or leaves a mark, the school nurse must be notified immediately to check the child and make an injury report.

Follow-up Procedures and Reporting Requirements

- A. Follow-up Procedures- At an appropriate time after a student has been released from a restraint, the school shall implement the follow-up procedures set forth below:
 - a. Review the restraint with the student to address the behavior that precipitated the restraint;
 - b. Review the incident with school personnel who administered the restraint to discuss whether proper restraint procedures were followed; and
 - c. Consider whether any follow-up is appropriate for the students who witnessed the incident.
- B. Reporting Requirements
 - a. Any physical restraint shall be reported immediately to administration and in the case of injury, to the nurse;
 - b. The school staff member who administers a physical restraint shall verbally inform the principal or his/her designee of the restraint as soon as possible and no later than the close of the school day in which the restraint was administered. A written report shall be completed and provided to the principal of the school no later than the next working day after the restraint was administered;
 - c. The Principal of the school shall maintain an on-going record of all reported instances of physical restraint;
 - d. The Principal (or his/her designee) shall verbally inform the student's parents or guardians of any physical restraint by a written report postmarked no later than one school working day following the use of any physical restraint and/or any physical restraint that results in an injury to a student or staff;
 - e. The principal shall provide the office of the superintendent and the director of special services with a copy of the written report of a physical restraint when such restraint has resulted in an injury to a student or staff member, or when an extended restraint (20 minutes or longer) has been administered as well as a copy of the school's on- going record of all reported instances of physical restraint for

the thirty days preceding the reported physical restraint.

This documentation must be provided to the Office of the Superintendent by no later than one school working day after the written report is received by the Director of Education or his/her designee.

District's Training Requirements

- A. For All Program Staff - Within the first month of each school year, the Principal of each school shall provide all program staff with training on this policy. Additionally, for all new school employees that are hired after the start of the school year, the principal shall, within the first month of their employment, provide the new employees with training on this policy. The training shall consist of the following:
 - a. This policy and related procedures and guidelines developed by the Director of Education;
 - b. Interventions that may preclude the need for restraint, including de-escalation of 70 problematic behaviors;
 - c. Types of restraints and related safety considerations, including information regarding the increased risk of injury to a student when an extended restraint is used;
 - d. Administering physical restraint in accordance with known medical or psychological limitations and/or behavioral intervention plans applicable to an individual student;
 - e. Identification of program staff who have received in-depth training certification in "Handle With Care" procedures.
- B. For Staff Authorized to Serve As A School-Wide Resource on the Proper Administration of Physical Restraints- At the beginning of each school year, the principal of each school shall identify program staff that is authorized to serve as a school-wide resource to assist in ensuring proper administration of physical restraint. The content of the in-depth training shall include, but not be limited to:
 - a. Appropriate procedures for preventing the need for physical restraint, including the de escalation of problematic behavior, relationship building and the use of alternatives to Restraint;
 - b. Description and identification of dangerous behaviors on the part of students that may indicate the need for physical restraint and methods for evaluating the risk of harm in individual situations in order to determine whether the use of restraint is warranted;
 - c. The simulated experience of administering and receiving physical restraint, instruction regarding the effect(s) on the person restrained, including instruction on monitoring physical signs of distress and obtaining medical assistance;
 - d. Instruction regarding documentation and reporting requirements and investigation of injuries and complaints; and
 - e. Demonstration by participants of proficiency in administering physical restraint.

Complaint Procedures

- A. Informal Resolution of Concern About Use of Physical Restraint
 - a. Before initiating a formal complaint procedure, a student or his/her parent/guardian who has concerns regarding a specific use of a physical restraint, may seek to resolve his/her

concerns regarding a specific use of a physical restraint by raising the issue with the principal of the school. The student and/or his/her parent/guardian should direct their concerns regarding a specific use of a physical restraint to the principal within ten (10) days of the parent/guardian's receipt of the written report from the school detailed above. The principal shall attempt, within his/her authority, to work with the individual to resolve the complaint fairly and expeditiously.

- b. If the student and/or his/her parent/guardian are not satisfied with the resolution, or if the student and/or his/her parent/guardian does not choose informal resolution, then the student and/or his/her parent/guardian may proceed with the formal complaint process.

B. Formal Resolution of Concern About Use of Physical Restraint

- a. A student or his/her parent/guardian, who has concerns regarding a specific use of a physical restraint, may seek to resolve his/her concerns regarding a specific use of a physical restraint by submitting a written complaint to the superintendent.
- b. The student and/or his/her parent/guardian should submit this letter to the superintendent within twenty (20) days of the parent/guardian's receipt of the written report from the school detailed above. The written complaint shall include:
 - i. The name of the student;
 - ii. The name of the school where the physical restraint allegedly occurred;
 - iii. The name of the individuals involved in the alleged physical restraint;
 - iv. The basis of the complaint or concern; and
 - v. The corrective action being sought.

The Director of Education (or his/her designee) shall conduct an investigation into the complaint promptly after receiving the complaint. In the course of its investigation, the Lead Person or his/her designees shall contact those individuals that have been referred to as having pertinent information related to the complaint.

Strict timelines cannot be set for conducting the investigation because each set of circumstances is different. The superintendent and/or his/her designees will make sure that the complaint is handled as quickly as is feasible. After completing the formal investigation, the Office of the Lead Person shall contact the individual who filed the complaint regarding the outcome of its investigation and its determination as to whether any corrective action is warranted.

Note: Please see the Special Education Handbook for Empowerment Academy's Physical Restraint Policy for Students with Disabilities per New Jersey state law.

Appendix E:

Infection Control and Communicable Disease Policy

Purpose:

Communicable diseases are transmitted from person to person by various routes. A basic understanding of how these diseases are transmitted and common prevention measures can help decrease the spread of infections. Early identification of signs and symptoms of communicable disease is of paramount importance to increase the health of the school population and decrease school absenteeism.

Background/Rationale:

In the school environment, many communicable diseases are transmitted from one individual to another. Effective control measures include education, avoidance of risk factors, sanitation, vaccination, early recognition of symptoms, health assessment, prompt diagnosis, and adequate isolation or treatment.

Illness:

When scholars are taken suddenly ill in school, they shall be sent or escorted to the nurse's office. If the nurse is not in the medical office, the scholar shall be sent or taken to the building principal's office or main office. In general, the same procedures that apply to accidents shall apply to sudden scholar illness. The school administration shall implement this policy.

Control of Communicable Diseases (as defined by the New Jersey Department of Health or Centers for Disease Control):

To protect the health of the scholars in our schools, all regulations of the state department of education, the state department of health and the local board of health shall be scrupulously observed, particularly those dealing with communicable diseases or conditions. Scholars who have been absent because of a reportable communicable disease must present a certificate of recovery from a licensed physician, nurse practitioner, or be examined by the medical inspector. The School Nurse shall observe scholars who show evidence of communicable disease and recommend their exclusion to the school principal. Recommendations shall be consistent with reporting requirements on communicable diseases as outlined in the New Jersey Health Code. Such scholars shall be isolated in the nurse's office until a parent/guardian picks them up, and any necessary measures have been taken to prevent the spread of the infection. The school nurse, under the direction of the medical inspector, shall instruct all teachers in the symptoms of the most common diseases or conditions at least once a year.

HIV:

Any scholar with HIV infection or AIDS or who lives with or is related to someone with HIV or AIDS shall not be excluded from general education, transportation services, extracurricular activities, athletic activities, assigned to home instruction or classified as eligible for special education because of the HIV infection. The school nurse shall recommend the exclusion of any individual with weeping skin lesions that cannot be covered.

Information Sharing:

In addition to the review of health and safety measures required by law, the school nurse shall individually instruct teachers from whose classrooms a scholar has been excluded in the symptoms of the disease for which the scholar was excluded. Scholar rights and confidentiality shall be protected by the law. No teacher shall attempt to diagnose any illness of a scholar but shall refer suspected cases to the nurse immediately. The School Nurse shall report all cases of communicable disease to the local board of health as required by law.

Handling Blood and Body Fluids:

The school's administration and School Nurse shall develop detailed routine procedures based on New Jersey administrative code and guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control for proper handling of blood and body fluids resulting from illness/accidents in the schools. These procedures shall be disseminated to all district staff and volunteers.

Blood Borne Pathogens Protocol:

- Practice effective hand washing (<http://www.cdc.gov/Features/HandWashing/>). • Always follow the OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens Standard and School District Exposure Control Plan (SDEP) when handling body fluids.
- Cover sores and open areas on the skin with a bandage which completely covers the affected area. Make sure that no fluids can leak through the bandage.
- Wash items contaminated with body fluids, such as saliva, blood, urine, feces, nasal secretions and vomit, following OSHA and CDC Guidelines:
 - Wash with soap or detergent and water, rinse and disinfect with a 1:10 bleach solution (mixed fresh daily) or another agent that is approved for tuberculosis germs. • Store disinfectants in a secure area, away from scholars.

Immunizations:

- Immunization requirements are mandated by the New Jersey department of Health and Senior Services (NJ DHSS) as outlined in N.J.A.C. 8:57(4.1), 8:57(4.20)
- The School Nurse will...
 - review the NJ DHHS Ch. 14 regulations annually regarding vaccine schedule/mandates.
 - maintain accurate immunization records on every scholar.
 - review incomplete records and send them to the parent/guardian written notification requesting the missing records.
 - follow up with any missing records.
 - exclude any scholar who does not meet the age-appropriate immunization requirements within 30 days of a written request, after consulting with the Director of Education (or his/her designee)
 - ensure that any scholar with a religious or medical exemption has proper documentation.
 - maintain a list of all scholars who are not immunized to assist with exclusion if an outbreak occurs.
 - complete the Annual Immunization Status Report annually and submit as 76 instructed by the state.
 - provide records to any Public Health Nurse conducting a state immunization audit and assist with appropriate information for follow up.

Reportable Disease:

- Reportable diseases are mandated by the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services (NJ DHSS) as outlined in N.J.A.C.8-57 (1.3-1.4).
- The School Nurse will...
 - review the State Regulations regarding immediately reportable diseases.
 - report a disease outbreak occurring in schools as defined in N.J.A.C. 8:57- 1.3
 - report any individual with diseases in N.J.A.C. 8:57-1.3 immediately by telephone and then in writing within 24 hours of diagnosis.
- The disease report will include:
 - The name of the disease
 - The name, age, date of birth, gender, ethnicity, home address and telephone

- number of the person infected or ill with such disease
- The date of the onset of illness
- The name, addresses, institution, and telephone number of the reporting official
- Any other information required by the Department concerning a specific disease

Exclusion:

Any scholar with or suspected of having the following diseases will be required to have medical clearance before returning to school:

- COVID-19, Fifth Disease, Conjunctivitis, Scabies, Coxsackie Virus, Ringworm, Impetigo, Chickenpox, Influenza, 2019-nCoV, Hand Foot and Mouth Disease, Pink Eye, Rotavirus, Pertussis, Meningitis, Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR), Hepatitis, and Scarlet Fever.

Please note this list is not all-inclusive and may change given the current Center for Disease Control and Department of Health guidelines.

Tuberculosis:

- Tuberculosis testing requirements are mandated by the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services (NJ DHSS) N.J.A.C. Title 8.
- The School Nurse will...
 - review the NJDHSS Annual Rules of the State Department for Mantoux Tuberculin Testing found in the Annual State Reports.
 - determine whether scholars and staff meet the eligibility for Mantoux testing.
- The administration will provide the staff with the name and address of the testing site.
- The School Nurse will...
 - provide the scholar with the name and address of a testing site.
 - read and document results for both scholar and staff Mantoux testing within the allowed time frame.
 - follow up with all referrals for positive reactors.

Bloodborne Pathogens:

- New Jersey state law N.J.A.C. 8:6 & 6:a requires that Standard Precautions be implemented in the school setting to protect staff as well as scholars in the handling of human blood and other specific body fluids.
- The School Nurse will...
 - attend an annual approved Bloodborne Pathogens Program.
 - implement standard precautions to prevent transmission of bloodborne pathogens, including Hepatitis B Virus and HIV.
- All staff will use personal protective equipment (PPE) to handle all bodily fluids containing visible blood and/or body fluids.
- The School Nurse will...
 - annually educate the staff about standard precautions and PPE.
 - request PPE and first aid supplies for the availability of the staff.

Exposure Control Plan:

- The administration will develop and make it easily accessible to all staff.
- The School Nurse will review the school's ECP annually.

Lice:

- Lice are not a reportable communicable disease but should be attended to immediately to minimize the spread of lice to other scholars and staff.
- No scholar will be excluded from school for lice unless they have active lice infestation and parents refuse to give treatment.
- The School Nurse will...
 - ensure that any scholar identified as having live louse or is found to have nits will provide proof of treatment with Lice shampoo before returning to school.
 - examine scholars' classmates for head lice and when the scholars return to school he/she will be assessed again for lice by the SN.
 - educate scholar's families on proper cleaning of personal items at home.
 - educate the staff on placing scholars' items in plastic bags for 10 days or longer if symptoms reoccur.
 - only screen scholars that are symptomatic or in the same class.

Individual Health Plan:

- Individual Health Plan (IHP) NJSA 18A40-12.12
- The School Nurse will develop an IHP for the care of a scholar with any health condition including but not limited to diabetes, asthma, allergies, and seizures in consultation with the parent or guardian which is consistent with the recommendations of the scholar's healthcare providers and which sets out the health services needed by the scholar at school.

Emergency Action Health Care Plan (EAP):

- This is an individualized HCP that outlines a set of procedural guidelines that provide specific directions about what to do in a particular emergency.
- The SN will develop an EAP for scholars with life-threatening conditions.

Physical Exams:

- N.J.A.C. 6A requires periodic physical exams as follows:
 - New/transfer scholars must have a physical exam no more than 365 days prior to school entry. Scholars should have a subsequent physical exam annually.
 - Scholars referred for child study team evaluation within the current year.
 - Before the start of participation in a School-sponsored sport.
- The School Nurse will...
 - be responsible for collecting/reviewing physical exams, notifying parents of the need for a current physical.
 - review physical exams for clearance before a scholar's participation in physical education or sports.
 - communicate with physical education teachers to inform them when scholars are medically cleared to return to full activity.
 - ensure confidentiality and keep health records in a locked file in the health office.
 - document physical exam results on the A-454 form.

Documenting First Aid/Illness:

- As per N.J.A.C. 6A, the School Nurse will...

- document in writing on every scholar evaluated on an individual form designated for that scholar only.
- record in writing any serious accident/injury that is witnessed, treated, or requires follow-up and places the original in the scholar's health file and gives a copy to the business administrator.
- give the parent/guardian a written memo if the illness/injury is significant or requires a follow-up evaluation.
- Any scholars that obtain a head injury will receive written notification and instructions for follow-up.

Standing Orders and First Aid Policy:

- N.J.A.C. 6A- requires that each district shall adopt written policies and procedures extending the emergency care provided to public school scholars who become ill at school or during participation on a school team or squad. (N.J.S.A., Ch.40 Title 18A).
- The Standing Orders for Nursing Professional and Standing Orders for Non-Nursing Professionals are updated and signed annually by the School's Physician.
- The School Nurse will...
 - keep a copy of the updated First Aid Policy in the nurse's office.
 - provide a copy of guidelines for Non-Nursing Professional staff to utilize in the event the nurse is not available.
 - ensure that a portable first aid kit is equipped at all times and placed in an accessible location for all staff to utilize.
 - ensure that a Nursing Professional accompanies all school-sponsored trips and consult with the Principal if no coverage can be provided.
- The Principal/Administrator will arrange for medical transportation and accompany any injured scholar when their parent or guardian is not available if deemed necessary by the School Nurse
- The School Nurse will follow the American Red Cross recommendations for First aid and physician signed standing orders.
- Scholars with a fever of 100.2 or greater will be sent home and exempt from school until they are 24 hours fever free without the use of antipyretic medication to prevent the spread of infection.
- The School Nurse will assess scholars who vomit and look sick during the school day to determine if they will be sent home for the day.

Empowerment Academy reserves the right to require clearance from a doctor (to be verified by School Nurse) for any circumstance a School Nurse deems necessary. EA will make special accommodations, such as Virtual Home Instruction, if necessary when excluding a child from school for a medical related issue. Please note all Health Policies are subject to change based on any current health crises. Thank you for your understanding.

Appendix F:

Inclement Weather Policy

There may be weather-related situations, in which, Empowerment Academy cannot physically open. **This will be deemed as an Emergency School Closing unless otherwise communicated.** Please always pay attention to updates from us via email communication.

Full Day Closing due to Inclement Weather

- Empowerment Academy will typically follow Jersey City School District for **full day closings**. These closings will be called before 6:30 a.m the day. However, we reserve the right to also make our own call for half days, delayed openings, and full day closings if we deem appropriate.
- If possible, we will make the call to close school prior to the day of. However, when dealing with weather the forecast can be unpredictable. With that stated, in order to not make unnecessary school closures that could impact the number of school days, we will often make the decision to close school--due to weather related concerns--no later than 6:30 a.m. **the day of** said closing.
- The following modes of communication regarding closures will be utilized:
 - a) Call, Email, and Text Message
 - b) Posting on our website: empacad.org
 - c) Posting on our Facebook page
 - d) Contact via the local news outlet

It is strongly encouraged that parents/guardians keep their contact information updated with the school. This is solely their responsibility so that Empowerment Academy can effectively and promptly communicate important information. You may update your contact information by contacting the school directly or navigating to our school website to access the “Parent” portal.

Delayed Opening or Partial Day Closing due to Inclement Weather

- In instances where a full day closure is not warranted but inclement weather creates a need for extra commute time for students/ staff and/or morning preparation for opening, Empowerment Academy will call a 2 hr delayed opening.
- Empowerment Academy will make a good faith effort to call early closures or cancel after school programming by 11:00 am. Being that weather forecasts can be unpredictable and we do not want to unnecessarily shorten a school day or inconvenience families, this may not always be possible. We appreciate your understanding and flexibility during these critical times.
- At the LES campus, a half day dismissal due to inclement weather will be...
 - a) 1:30 pm for K-2 students
 - b) 12:30 pm for 3-4 students

Please follow these times unless otherwise communicated.

- Parents will be contacted by call, email, and text via our messaging system.
- In the event that all after school, aftercare, and enrichment programs are canceled, all students will be dismissed at the normal pick up time and there will not be an “aftercare drop-in” option available.
- We ask the following of all families
 - a) Develop a plan for pick up in the event that there is an early closure or delayed opening.
 - b) Pay close attention to messages that are sent as late pick ups can directly impact the safe commute of teachers/staff members.
 - c) If you are running late or having a difficult time getting to one of our campuses, please call us immediately so that we can plan accordingly.
- The cancelation of afterschool, aftercare, or enrichment programming will also include any special event(s) to be held at the school on the day of cancelation.
- Please note that if the weather forecast is predicting bad weather in Jersey City during your normal time of commuting home with your child, you are welcome to pick him/her up early without any penalty. However, please do not arrive after 3:30 pm (for K-2

students) or 2:45 pm (for 3-4 students) as this will create a disruption to the daily dismissal process.

- Please note that Empowerment Academy relies on Beloved Community Charter School (BCCS) for transportation services. Therefore, the timing of delayed openings or decisions regarding closures is heavily influenced by their ability to provide transportation services.

Important note: If more than 4 snow days are utilized, school days will be made up during Spring Break or at the end of the academic year. If less snow days are utilized, we may announce additional school closings. Empowerment Academy reserves the right to alter the school calendar if it deems changes are necessary.

Appendix G:

Gifted and Talented/ Honors Programs

Our Empowerment Academy Charter School (EACS) Gifted and Talented (G & T) Program provides programming designed to meet the needs of students **with exceptional intellectual abilities** from Kindergarten through Seventh Grade. **We realize gifted students have special educational needs** which must be met for them to reach their full potential, both intellectually and emotionally. We have developed our programming in accordance with state regulations and suggestions from the New Jersey Association for Gifted Children (NJAGC).

Selection: Beginning in the 2020-2021 school year, all 2nd grade scholars participated in a general screening for Gifted Services. The assessment used is a research-based test which can be given to all students from grades K-12. This assessment uses shapes and color variations rather than letters and words. Therefore, it is a non-biased assessment; this is equitable for our scholars who are English Language Learners, Students with Disabilities and who may have a limited command of the English language. Families of scholars who need further evaluation for G&T will be evaluated by their current classroom teachers using a TABs (traits, aptitude, behaviors) Observation Form. This process allows the teacher to evaluate the students, pre-selected by the screener, to determine which gifted attributes they are displaying in class that indicate a need for Gifted & Talented placement and instruction. If selected to participate in the Gifted and Talented Program, scholars will continue in the G&T program for the remainder of their tenure at EACS (2nd-8th). During the 2022-2023 school year we plan to introduce a second general screening for 5th graders and a pre-G&T pull-out program for K-1st grade.

**This selection process is separate from the process for Honors Placement (Grades 6-7).*

The EACS Honors Program (Grades 6 & 7)

Our Empowerment Academy Charter School (EACS) Honors Program provides programming designed to meet the needs of students **with high academic achievement** in their 5th and 6th grade core subjects and high scores on Trimester and Growth Assessments. When administered, NJSLA scores are also utilized to determine placement in our Honors Program. **We realize that students with high achievement and growth** need classes with greater rigor for them to be successful in Advanced Placement (AP) high school courses. We have developed our curriculum for the Honors Program in accordance with the requirements for entering the Advanced Placement (AP) Program in high school developed by The College Board.

Selection: Multiple measurements are factored into Honors Program selection. Scholars must maintain all 3s and 4s (*As & Bs) in ELA and Math in 5th grade and must maintain 3s and 4s (*As & Bs) in all core subjects in 6th

grade (ELA, Math, Science and Social Studies). In addition, scholars must have a MAP RIT growth score that is higher than the national Normative Average for their grade level in both ELA and Math. Scholars must also pass their Trimester Exams with a 70 or better. If NJSLA is administered, they must “Meet or Exceed Expectations” on the state’s assessment.

Please contact our Data and Assessment Coordinator for more in depth details/information pertaining to these programs.

Appendix H:

Empowerment Academy’s Chapter of National Elementary Honor Society (NEHS)

PURPOSE

The purpose of this chapter shall be to recognize students for their outstanding academic achievement and demonstrated personal responsibility, to provide meaningful service to the school and community, and to develop essential leadership skills within the students of Empowerment Academy Charter School.

POWERS AND AUTHORITY

This chapter operates under the direction of and in full compliance with the National Constitution of NEHS. The chapter adviser is given the authority to supervise the administration of chapter activities, as delegated by the school principal. Final authority on all activities and decisions of the chapter resides with the school principal.

Nondiscrimination. Our chapter of NEHS maintains policies and practices that are designed to prevent discrimination against any qualified candidate or member on the basis of race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexuality and disability. This policy of nondiscrimination applies to all activities and practices, including the chapter administration and the selection, discipline, and dismissal of members.

MEMBERSHIP ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION

Membership in this chapter is an honor bestowed upon deserving students by the faculty and shall be based on the criteria of Scholarship and Responsibility.

Membership in this chapter shall be known as active, honorary, and graduate. Active members become graduate members (alumni) upon completion of the 6th grade. Graduate (alumni) and honorary members have no voice or vote in chapter affairs but are expected and encouraged to continue supporting NEHS initiatives and activities.

Eligibility:

- A. Candidates eligible for selection to this chapter must be enrolled in grades **5 or 6**.
- B. To be eligible for selection to membership in this chapter, the candidate must have been enrolled for a period equivalent to **one trimester** at Empowerment Academy Charter School
- C. Candidates must meet or exceed the national minimum standard for scholarship (i.e., academic performance), which is a **cumulative** scholastic average of at least **85 percent, B, or 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale)** or the equivalent standard of excellence.
- D. Candidates must not have any **suspensions** from school at the time of consideration.
- E. Candidates may have no more than **(1)** discipline referral. This allows room for teachable moments and growth. Poor choices are opportunities for learning but should not become a habit.
- F. Upon meeting the grade level, enrollment, GPA, and discipline standards, candidates shall then be considered based on their demonstrated personal responsibility.

The selection of members to this chapter shall be by a majority vote of the Faculty Council which consists of faculty members appointed by the principal. The chapter adviser is a non voting member of the Faculty Council who facilitates all meetings of the council.

Prior to the final selection, the following shall occur:

- A. Students' academic records shall be reviewed to determine scholastic eligibility.
- B. Students who are eligible scholastically (i.e., candidates) shall be notified and asked to
- C. complete and submit the Candidate's Form for further consideration.
- D. The faculty shall be requested to evaluate candidates determined to be scholastically eligible
- E. using the official evaluation form provided by the chapter adviser.
- F. The Faculty Council shall review the Candidates Forms, faculty evaluations and other relevant
- G. information to determine those who fully meet the selection criteria for membership.

The selection of active members shall be held once a year during the third trimester of the school year.

Candidates become members when inducted at a special induction ceremony.

Transfer membership. Membership can be transferred from one chapter of NEHS to another.

- A. An active member of the National Elementary Honor Society who transfers from this school with an active chapter of NEHS will be given an official letter indicating the status of his/her membership.
- B. An active member of the National Elementary Honor Society who transfers to this school will be automatically accepted for membership in this chapter. The Faculty Council shall grant to the transferring member at least one semester to attain the membership requirements and, thereafter, this member must maintain those requirements for this chapter in order to retain his/her membership.

Appendix I:

Tiered Response to Behavior

The purpose of a tiered response to behavior is to encourage student growth. As a staff, we always assume the best of our students. Therefore, there is a gradual increase in disciplinary actions, dependent upon the severity and frequency of the occurrence/breach of the Student Code of Conduct.

In this tiered approach, demerits (marks against a student as a result of an offense) are issued. Demerits are an age appropriate way of teaching students to correlate action to logical consequences.

Tier 1: ISC Referral

Within this tier, a student will be referred to the Instructional Support Counselor (ISC). This referral will incur Three (3) demerits.

Infractions within this tier may include (but are not limited to):

- Ignoring or Refusing
- Negative Response
- Off Task Behavior
- Side Conversations

- Eating in class
- Sleeping (student check-in before point deduction)
- Level 1 uniform infraction- can be fixed by removing an article of clothing (*ie. non-uniform sweatshirt*)

Consequences within this tier may include (but are not limited to):

- Reset
- Lunch Detention
- Parent/Guardian contact

Tier 2: DOS Referral

Within this tier, a student will be referred to the Dean of Students (DOS). This referral will incur FIVE (5) demerits.

Infractions within this tier may include (but are not limited to):

- Disrespect to Adult
- Disrespect to Peer
- Horseplay/Play Fighting
- Inappropriate Language
- Leaving class without permission
- Repeated Ignoring and Refusing
- Skipping Class
- Uniform Infraction (Can not be fixed)

Consequences within this tier may include (but are not limited to):

- In School Suspension (ISS)
 - This includes the following procedure:
 - Parent phone call
 - Letter to parent explaining the infraction and consequence
 - Student will remain in Room 310 for the day with the ISC and/or DOS.
 - All teachers for that scheduled day are contacted via email and must provide sufficient work for the day.
 - Students should be given work that corresponds to what would be covered in their regular class that day.
 - If the student violates the rules of ISS he/she will be subject to OSS

Tier 3: DOS referral Non-Negotiables

Within this tier, a student will be referred to the Dean of Students (DOS) and are subject to non-negotiable consequences. This referral will incur TEN (10) demerits.

Infractions within this tier may include (but are not limited to):

- Academic Dishonesty
- Inappropriate physical contact
- Cursing
- Disrespect to Property
- HIB
- Cell Phone/Technology Violation
- Leaving school premises

- Physical Altercation
- Play Fighting (Harm)
- Possession of Contraband
- Theft
- Unsafe Conduct
- Vandalism

Consequences within this tier:

- Out of School Suspension
 - This includes the following procedure:
 - Parent phone call
 - Letter to parent explaining the infraction and the consequence
 - Student is not allowed in the building for the duration of the suspension. The number of days will be determined by the Dean of Students.

Please note that any egregious student behaviors, whether singular or recurring, that require a long term suspension or expulsion will not be subject to the tiered approach above. These occurrences are serious and will be handled as outlined in the Discipline section of this handbook, which can be found on page 37.

Appendix J: Commitment Contract

Commitment Contract

(Please tear this page off. This must be signed by both you and an Empowerment Staff Member, at the school.)

At Empowerment Academy, we are more than a school. We are a family. We expect all of our scholars to achieve at great levels and become lifelong learners and socially contributory citizens. In order for this to happen, both the school and family must make a huge commitment to each other. By reading and acknowledging this contract, you are committing to abide by the rules set forth in the interest of propelling your child to success. As a school, we are committing to doing whatever it takes to help your child grow academically, socially, and emotionally. Together, we can achieve great things. Remember, to get different results we must be different.

Parents/ Guardians: By signing this commitment contract, you are committing to be an active partner in your child's education. You are committing to abide by the rules of Empowerment Academy. You are committing to assume the best of staff and raise concerns respectfully.

Empowerment Staff: By signing this contract we are committing to being active partners in each child's education. We are committing to always assume the best, model respectful behavior, and do whatever it takes to act in the best interest of all of our scholars.

Please check off the box and initial to the right that you have read and understand the policies in this handbook, especially with respect to:

- ☐ **Student Conduct**
- ☐ **Academics and Promotion**
- ☐ **Attendance Policies and Procedures**
- ☐ **Communication and Visiting Empowerment**
- ☐ **Uniform Policy**
- ☐ **Life's Work at Empowerment**
- ☐ **When I receive the Family Handbook I will review it thoroughly and abide by all policies.**

(guardian name, printed)

(guardian signature)

(scholar's name)

(staff member, printed)

(date)

(scholar's grade)

Appendix K: Opting Out of Instructional Content

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We understand that there may be instances where you may be interested in opting your child out of certain instructional content.

As per the New Jersey Department of Education's policy *N.J.S.A. 18A:35-4.7*, parents have the right to request that their child be excused from any part of *the health, family life education, or sex education* curriculum that “is in conflict with their conscience, or sincerely held moral or religious beliefs.” This includes content in health class related to human sexuality, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. In addition, as per *N.J.S.A. 18A:35-4.2*, parents have the right to request that their child be excused from “certain school activities related to animal dissection, etc.”

Please be mindful that policies above do not cover opting out of topics outside of health class/ curriculum and animal dissections. Therefore, with the exception of animal dissections, students cannot opt out of content/ topics that are taught in non-health classes.

If you would like to opt your child out of any content as described above, please follow these steps:

1. **Submit a Written Request:** Provide a written request to the school principal, stating your desire to opt your child out of the specific content or activity. Please include your child's name, grade, and the rationale for your request.
2. **Alternative Assignments:** The school will provide an alternative assignment or activity.
3. **Ongoing Communication:** Maintain open communication with your child's teacher and the school administration

It is important to note that we respect your right to opt your child out of certain health and animal dissection related instructional content. We are also committed to providing a comprehensive and inclusive education that aligns with the New Jersey Student Learning Standards.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the school administration. We are here to support you and your child throughout this process.