

EMPOWERMENT ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL



FAMILY HANDBOOK 2016-2017

This handbook is periodically updated.
A fully updated Handbook will always be available at www.empacad.org/handbook.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook has been created to provide you important information about Empowerment Academy, and to ensure that scholars and their families have a clear understanding of school expectations.

Empowerment Academy will review school values and school behavior and academic expectations with its scholars in September, and repeatedly throughout the school year. Meanwhile, at school orientations and at later one-on-one meetings, parents and guardians will have ample opportunities to ask the School's teachers about these expectations, and to discuss plans for helping scholars meet those expectations.

*We believe it is important for parents and guardians to review school expectations with their young scholars **at home, too, at the very beginning of the school year.***

Please acknowledge receipt of this handbook by signing and returning the Commitment Contracts you will be provided, and then review what is in this Handbook with your Empowerment Academy scholar(s).

This will help them make a strong start!

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EMPOWERMENT ACADEMY'S MISSION & VISION

The founders of Empowerment Academy Charter School believe that an education which makes children feel loved, that leads them to care about one another and to want to develop their minds and potential to serve and contribute to their communities, and that 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, and 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, leave their marks.

Moreover, should our fusion of research-based, proven practices succeed at achieving their intended goals, we believe the Jersey City 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.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Empowerment Academy Charter School is characterized by a school climate that is orderly, supportive, and focused on academic work. 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. 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:

- o Respect
- o Caring
- o Responsibility
- o Positivity
- o 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 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.

Active 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 our 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, or (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 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.

ACADEMICS AT EMPOWERMENT ACADEMY

Empowerment Academy's Academic Program and Extended School Day

Empowerment Academy Charter School maintains a rigorous academic program that prepares scholars to graduate from a four-year college and enjoy unlimited career opportunities.

Important elements of Empowerment Academy's academic program include:

- An extended school day;
- 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 proven education program licensed from SABIS Educational Systems.
- Academic Progress Monitoring and Tutoring
- Homework where skills or knowledge items that were learned during the school day are practiced and reinforced. (Note: Only a small amount of daily homework is assigned during the early grade levels. Moreover, we do not expect parents to be teachers, so homework assignments will not introduce any new learning. But homework is still extremely important and students are expected to complete their homework every evening as it both reinforces learning goals and helps to foster critically important study habits.)

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 further, our teachers work together in professional learning communities to share ideas, 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 on-going professional development training all throughout the year.

The Common Core and New Jersey’s Curriculum Content Standards

Empowerment Academy Charter School is committed to the nationwide effort to improve public education. It supports New Jersey’s adoption of the Common Core Curriculum in English Language Arts and Mathematics, as well as New Jersey’s challenging Core Curriculum Content 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.

The SABIS[®] Educational System

The SABIS[®] Educational System is an integrated, comprehensive, kindergarten through twelfth grade academic program that has been developed and refined over a 125-year period. With a balance of academics, self-development, and life preparation, the SABIS[®] Educational System prepares its students for success in college, fosters a lifelong interest in learning, and develops responsible world-class citizens. It blends quality education with traditional values of hard work and responsibility for self and others.

The SABIS[®] Educational System consists of a demanding curriculum, an intense, disciplined, and interactive approach to deliver the intellectual material, and rigorous homework expectations.

In SABIS[®] schools, 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, the SABIS[®] Educational System helps each student achieve his/her full potential.

Some important features of the SABIS[®] Educational System include:

- A safe, disciplined, and positive environment that encourages learning and responsible behavior;
- A well-structured and comprehensive curriculum;
- Books designed to dovetail precisely with the curriculum;
- Proven instructional methods that keep students engaged and learning efficiently;
- Timely tracking of student performance through regular assessment to fill any learning gaps;
- Cutting-edge educational tools to support the SABIS[®] program and enhance efficiency; and
- Student-led organizations that foster the development of initiative, leadership, self-confidence and positive attitudes and behaviors.

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 supports to these students to ensure that they fully succeed academically.

A Typical Student Day at Empowerment Academy

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

8:15 am	Breakfast in the classroom
8:30 am	Morning Meeting/Announcements
8:35 am	Start of the Instructional Day
.....	Three to Four Academic/Activity Periods of Varying Lengths (Avg. of 45 Minutes Each)
.....	Lunch and Recess
.....	Three to Four Academic/Activity Periods of Varying Lengths (Avg. of 45 Minutes Each)
3:45 pm	Closing Activities and Pack-Up
3:55 pm	Dismissal for Pick-Up Students
4:00-4:35 pm	Homework Lab for Bus Students
4:35-4:45 pm	Bus Dismissal
4:35-5:30 pm	Afterschool Programming

- We schedule activities each week that are not only educational, but outright fun, to make school a joyous place to be
- There is a rest time for Kindergartners
- In all grades, periods are reserved each week for extracurricular activities, which are scheduled *during* the school day to increase participation in these important, skill-developing activities and to break up the academic work
- Students have Spanish at least 3 times per week
- Empowerment Academy's classes in the arts may cover the visual arts, music, dance and theater
- Your child's homeroom instructor will provide a schedule for the days that your child must wear their PE uniform

Arrival and Dismissal

Students will shake the hands or waive to school leaders upon their arrival at the school. This reinforces our Core Values of Respect for one's community and, more broadly, of respect for others, generally.

School begins at 8:30 a.m. Students may arrive at any time after 8:15 a.m. but must arrive before 8:25 am to receive breakfast. Students who arrive to their classroom at 8:35 or later will be marked tardy. Parents/guardians who need to drop off children earlier may enroll their child(ren) in Empowerment Academy's Early Drop Off Program, permitting early drop off between 7:45 am and 8:15 am for a fee of \$50 per month.

Please note that the dismissal time for pick up kids will be at 3:55 pm. Students riding the bus will attend homework lab until 4:30 and then dismiss from the school until approximately 4:40 pm. Because Jersey City is a high traffic area, bus routes can be delayed. If you'd like your student to get home from school slightly earlier, please consider picking them up. Students not picked up by 4:00 will incur a late fee if they are not a bus student.

Daily School Dismissal

At the beginning of the school year, each family is required to complete a dismissal form indicating the adults who may pick up their child at the end of the school day. Children will not be released to anyone not listed on the form. If someone other than the people indicated on the form will be picking up your child on a given day, you must send a note explaining the arrangement in the morning. If your student is typically a bus student but you would like to pick them up one day, you must call the main office to notify them of this change. Please do not just write a note to your teacher.

Students Walking Home

Once Empowerment Academy adds higher grade levels, if your home is within 1 mile of Empowerment Academy, or if your scholar rides one of our buses and your home is within 1 mile of your scholar's bus stop, you may instruct Empowerment Academy through the submission of a school-created Permission Form to permit your scholar to walk home from school or his or her bus stop *provided* that you submit the form at least 2 days before the arrangement is to go into effect (verbal instructions will not be accepted), and that

- Your scholar is either in Grade 3 or higher, or
- Your Grade K-2 scholar is accompanied on the walk by a sibling in Grade 3 or higher.

Early Dismissal

Please try to arrange appointments for after school whenever possible, and please appreciate that multiple early pick-ups may necessitate a parent conference, as taking your scholar out of school before the end of the school day can be disruptive to a class. With ½ days on Fridays, there should not be the need to schedule doctor appointments during school hours Monday-Thursday. Please use Friday afternoons for this purpose.

If you will need to pick up your child before the school day ends (prior to 3:55 pm), please provide advance notification to your child's teacher whenever possible. You will need to go to the office and sign the Early Dismissal Sign-Out Sheet. A child will be dismissed early only to a parent or other properly authorized and identified adult. A letter from you properly identifying another adult whom you authorize to pick up your child will be required.

We strongly discourage pick-ups between 3:30 and 3:55pm, as the office and staff are fully engaged in school wide dismissal procedures at this time.

Afterschool Programs

From 4:35 p.m. – 5:30 p.m., Empowerment Academy offers an array of after school academic programs, club activities, and a paid Aftercare Program.

These programs are provided for the benefit of Empowerment Academy scholars and working families. Please appreciate 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 and policies, or if parents/guardians do not pick-up their scholars at 5:30 p.m., when the programs end. Late pick-ups will incur an Aftercare fee. Three or more violations of rules relating to pick-up time or scholar behavior will result in a scholar being removed from a program.

Also, please note that although some of these programs will provide scholars an opportunity to work on their homework, it is still vitally important that parents/guardians fulfill their responsibilities to check over their child's homework *at home*.

Homework = Life's Work

Homework 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 master and retain newly learned skills and knowledge. In addition, and just as importantly, it develops good study habits and scholars' academic self-discipline.

Indeed, at Empowerment Academy, homework is called *Life's Work* because the self-discipline and the skills it develops 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 and to develop his skills and character. It was only his childhood's life's work that made his later life's work possible.

It is vital, therefore, that parents/guardians show interest in their scholar's homework, and support their scholar's development of good study habits and academic self-discipline. Reserve a quiet, well-lit place at home where your scholar can do his or her homework each day. Help your scholar develop the self-discipline of doing his or her homework at a regular time daily,

while he or she is still mentally sharp, not too tired. Encourage your scholar to review his or her work before beginning, to confirm in his or her own mind its value as something that will help him or her grow strong and able, and to think through the strategies he or she will use to complete it.

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 Saturday school or during fun privileges or events at school. This will also affect their report card grades and may lead to suspension from school. If a child is having a problem with completing the homework assigned, please contact a teacher for assistance. We will be happy to help!

Homework Responsibilities

We hold Empowerment Academy's teachers accountable for creating a school-home connection regarding homework assignments, and for creating meaningful homework assignments that:

- reinforce classroom instruction;
- are varied in type;
- help students fully master and retain newly acquired skills and knowledge; and
- provide a way to check a scholar's mastery of new skills and/or knowledge.

In addition, we hold our teachers accountable, after homework is completed, for providing scholars with feedback on their work.

Scholars are expected to:

- promptly inform parents/guardians of any assignments given in class;
- accept responsibility for completing assignments on time, accurately, and neatly;
- complete any assignments missed due to absences;
- always try their best; and
- to *read* every day, even when homework-related reading or homework assignments are not assigned.

Parents/guardians are expected to:

- provide their scholar a time, and a well-lit, quiet place for daily homework;
- help their scholar develop the self-discipline of completing his or her assignments daily;
- be aware of their scholar's assignments, review his or her work, and assist as needed;
- ensure that their scholar completes assignments in line with Empowerment Academy's high quality standards;
- talk with their scholar about what he or she learned at school and through their homework, as well as the importance of these new skills, and through this, to encourage their child to develop a positive attitude about learning and their personal future;
- to read to or with their child *every* night for at least 15 minutes and sign the reading log
- review and respond to the parent/teacher communication log and sign it every night

Life's Work that is not signed by the family is considered and noted as incomplete. If the reading log is not signed, life's work is considered incomplete.

Empowerment Academy's Academic Year and Grading System

At Empowerment Academy, the academic year is divided into three trimesters.

- Throughout each trimester, we constantly assess our scholars' progress mastering new skills and knowledge items, so when a student is struggling with new learning, we can provide immediate assistance.
- In addition, for all grades beyond Kindergarten, there are two Periodic Exams each trimester, covering approximately 4 weeks of new material each; and for all grades including Kindergarten, there is a Final Exam at the end of each trimester.
 - All Periodic and Final Exams are preceded by a period during which previously learned material is reviewed.
 - The cycle of new learning, review, and examination helps our scholars move material from their short-term memory to their long-term memory, and to build an ever-compounding foundation of skill and knowledge item mastery.
 - In addition, the exam-provided objective evidence of students' learning progress works to increase students' confidence in their academic abilities and to make learning fun as students see themselves compounding mastery upon mastery. (Students are especially encouraged when exams show them having mastered skills or knowledge items that they initially found challenging.)
- Exams are not all equally weighted for grading purposes. The Exams at the end of the year – and especially the Final Exam at the end of the third trimester – are given extra weight.
 - Taking a data-driven approach to instruction, we work with students on skills which early exams indicate they have not fully mastered so that by the time the late exams that really count for their grade come along, they *have* fully mastered those skills.
 - This doesn't just help scholars *feel* like successful learners, it ensures that they *are* successful learners – and develops their love of learning.
- Report cards are released 3 times a year to parents. Other, additional progress reports are also sent home from a scholar's teachers.

Report Card Sample

A sample of the Report Card students receive follows below. (The report card for kindergartners is somewhat different: it details scholars' developing skills and masteries.)

**EMPOWERMENT ACADEMY'S PROMOTION AND RETENTION POLICY
FOR GRADES KINDERGARTEN THROUGH FIVE**

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 of School..

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.

Summer School is offered to different classes of students:

1. Students who are being retained. Summer School is recommended for these students to bring them closer to the level that they need to be at in order to successfully master the academic standards (i.e. skills and knowledge items) of the grade in which they are being retained.
2. Students who are being promoted but lack full mastery of grade level academic standards. Summer School is recommended for students with a low but passing average in Math or ELA to better prepare them for the next grade level.
3. Students whose retention is uncertain. Summer School is required for students at risk of failing both Math and ELA or achieving a failing overall average. Promotion for these students is conditioned on the student successfully completing Summer School thereby meeting Empowerment Academy's research-based, standards mastery benchmarks for grade-level promotion

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. The school shall inform parents/guardians when formative assessment data leads to their children receiving academic interventions and shall explain how these parents/guardians can support this work and help their children progress academically.

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 trimester, 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.

In May, teachers shall call and/or meet with parents/guardians whose children will need to attend Summer School and shall inform them of the subject areas in which their children need to increase their standards

mastery, and what these parents/guardians can do to assist their children

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. When a student transitions to class, even 5 minutes late, it disrupts the learning environment because instruction starts on time in all classrooms. Parents/guardians and students are therefore expected to maintain a very high level of scholar attendance at school and on-time arrival.

Indeed, attendance is so important that New Jersey state law *requires* that Empowerment Academy document all days when a scholar is absent from school and categorize these days as either "excused" or "unexcused," in accordance with strict state regulations and procedures. Empowerment Academy will accordingly monitor your scholar's attendance closely throughout the year.

Excused Absences

Examples of absences that under NJ law are to be categorized as excused are those related to:

- Observance of state approved religious holidays. If a religious holiday extends over a period of days, only one day of absence may be excused for the particular holiday.

A list of the State of New Jersey Approved Religious Holidays can be found at the NJ Department of Education website, www.state.nj.us/education/genfo/holidays1112.htm.

- Serious, acute illness or death within the immediate family.
- Required attendance at court.
- Visitation to secondary institutions for purposes of exploring enrollment.
- Medically verified physical or emotional illness (requires parental note with verification determination to be made by school nurse or a doctor's note after three consecutive days).

Per the last bullet point 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. See the "Health and Safety" section of this Handbook for complete signs of illness.)

That said, ALL excused absences, even those for medical reasons, require either *prior* arrangement with the school administration, or a note/documentation from a scholar's parent/guardian, upon the scholar's return to school, which explains the reason for the absence. **Indeed, after three absences for medical reasons, a doctor's note is *required* for the absences to be considered excused.**

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, and for informing the school of 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 or a morning phone call about the fact that a scholar will be absent, Empowerment Academy may contact the scholar's family. If there are instances where parents/guardians are permitting excessive absenteeism or late arrivals, or where the number of cumulative absences is high, letters will be sent home even if the absences are "excused." This is because under New Jersey 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. 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 classroom teacher will generate a form letter that he/she will mail to the home of the student informing the parent/guardian of excessive absences. The teacher will keep a copy of the letter and also send a copy to the administration. This warning will state that because of excessive absences, their son/daughter is in danger of failing.

2) Phone Call to Parent/Guardian: For 7 cumulative unexcused absences, a phone call will be made to the parent/guardian of the student alerting them that because of their child's excessive absences, he/she is 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.

*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.*

Court Fines / Denial of Grade Promotion for Excessive Absenteeism

Empowerment Academy will work with families to find solutions to attendance problems.

It is important that parents/guardians understand that school attendance in 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.

Absence During Testing Periods

If a scholar has an absence during Empowerment Academy 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.

Tardy Arrivals

Scholars are expected to arrive to school and class on time. Being late to school takes precious educational time away from scholars, can be disruptive to the rest of the class, and hinder their learning, as well. Therefore, tardiness should be avoided unless absolutely necessary.

Scholars must arrive before 8:25 am to receive breakfast. If a scholar does not arrive by 8:35am, s/he is considered late to school.

Whenever circumstances necessitate that a scholar report to school late, the scholar's parent/guardian must escort the scholar to the front door and sign the scholar in at the security office. Scholars will then need to obtain a late pass to be admitted to class.

Consequences for Unexcused Tardiness

Under state law, five tardy arrivals are equal to an unexcused absence on a scholar's attendance record. Consistent tardiness can, therefore, result in grade non-promotion at the end of the school year.

To avoid such problems, Empowerment Academy will make a phone call or send a letter home to parents after the third tardy arrival of a student, and will *require* a parent-teacher conference after the tenth.

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, and then the Head of School). You will always find us ready to talk about 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 by responding as soon as possible; and certainly within 24 hours. We will also respond to you within 24 hours.

That said, for security purposes, as well as for scheduling, all visits/tours should be arranged through the main office or with your teacher in advance, so approval can be obtained prior to the visit/tour, and all parents, guests and/or visitors must sign in at the office before visiting any classroom or taking a tour of the school.

Open Houses & School Tours

We are extremely pleased that our school families have chosen to enroll their scholar at Empowerment Academy Charter School.

To introduce parents/guardians to our staff and their scholars' teachers, and to give parents/guardians an opportunity to tour our school facility, we have scheduled an orientation for parents/guardians who are new to Empowerment Academy on Tuesday, August 30th, and a Back-To-School Night for all parents/guardians on Thursday, September 8th.

We recommend that parents/guardians also tour the school during the school day when children are present. 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 "required meetings" and as the best time to get an overview of plans and expectations for the year relating to your scholar. These conferences are absolutely mandatory. If you cannot make the conference at your scheduled time, it is your obligation to contact the teacher or the Dean of Students 24 hours in advance.

You or the teachers 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 Head of School 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 for you.

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.

Phone Calls and Individual Meetings

When you call a staff member, if she or he is available, your call will be immediately directed. If not, a message will be left, and your call will, in nearly all cases, be answered within 24 hours. When you call a teacher, to avoid interrupting instruction, a message will be taken and he or she will get back to you within 24 hours, if possible. (Note: While we encourage our staff to be in constant communication with families, we do protect and preserve all instructional time. That 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.)

When interested in meeting with staff or faculty, we request that you make an appointment so that we can give you the full attention that you need when you come in. Drop in visits will likely not be accommodated because of scheduling needs and professional requirements of staff. It also helps if, when making an appointment, you will describe the general nature of your inquiry so that the administrator or teacher can gather information about the matter. Your confidentiality will be respected when leaving such messages.

Visiting Classrooms

You are always welcome to visit the school and the classrooms. As mentioned above, visitors must sign in at the office, and out of courtesy to the teacher and students, it is requested that you arrange your visit with your scholar's teacher in advance. Please let the teacher know what you are most interested in seeing or how you might enjoy providing classroom help. Classroom visits should not last longer than an hour unless there is a special project or activity under way in which you are participating. When visiting, please work closely with the teacher to minimize classroom disruptions.

Volunteering at Empowerment Academy

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

Volunteering is an especially rewarding way to be involved in the educational life of your scholar, and the school benefits, as well.

Some ways to volunteer include participating with Empowerment Academy's Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) or its Title I Parent Advisory Council, which you can read about on

Empowerment Academy's website. Additional roles and/or duties for which parents or guardians can volunteer include:

- As "class parents"
- As "reading buddies"
- Coordinating or teaching an after school club
- Helping with lunch or recess duties
- Planning, organizing, setting-up, and cleaning up after school functions
- Fundraising
- Assisting with community outreach
- With PTO (Parent-Teacher Organization) events
- Contributing to our newsletter
- As a trip chaperone

Some volunteer opportunities may require fingerprinting and background checks. But 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 Charter School, and to experience the thrill of seeing children learn.

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

HEALTH, SAFETY, AND SECURITY

Should you have any health-related questions or concerns relating to your Empowerment Academy scholar, please call Empowerment Academy's school nurse. 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, has security personnel, cameras, and systems in place all throughout the day.

Immunization Records/Health Forms

The State of New Jersey requires that each child be immunized in accordance with state requirements for children enrolled in school, and each child must have an annual physical examination on file with the school nurse. If you have not provided the required immunization records or health forms, Empowerment Academy is not permitted to allow your scholar to attend classes until the paperwork is turned in.

Medication

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

If prescription medication needs to be administered in school, the school nurse cannot administer it nor may other school personnel without a physician's consent form. These forms are available in the office.

Note, too, that the school will not administer non-prescription medicine (such as Tylenol) to students without written permission.

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. It is imperative, therefore, that parents provide phone numbers for use in emergencies, and that these numbers be kept 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 on an accident form 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 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.

Accident Insurance

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

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect

It is the school's legal obligation to report any sign of abuse or neglect to the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS).

Empowerment Academy

UNIFORM POLICY

The purpose of the student dress code is to promote high standards of conduct and behavior among students, to 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.

Parents should write the scholar's name in permanent marker on the tags of all clothing so that if it is lost it can be returned to you. Since every scholar wears the same clothing, mark your tags clearly.

For Boys

- **Shirt:** Empowerment Academy purple polo shirt with the school's logo. The shirt is available in short and long sleeves. A solid white or black undershirt may be worn under the uniform shirt so long as it is not visible. Uniform shirts must be tucked in.
- **Pants:** Standard khaki-colored or tan pants or shorts. You may get the pants with a zipper or the pull-on. The pants need to fit correctly (no baggy style) with a belt.
- **Belt:** Solid dark-colored belt must be worn at all times.
- **Shoes/Sneakers:** Shoes or sneakers must be solid black and closed-toe due to safety. There should be no embellishments or visible logos. No boots, no sandals, no flip-flops, no wheels, and no bells/lights/whistles are permitted. The shoe policy is the same in the winter months. Students must have on sneakers or shoes. If they wear boots to school they must change into the proper footwear before breakfast. On P.E. days, students should wear solid black sneakers.
- **Socks:** Solid black, brown, or white socks may be worn.
- **Sweater (Optional):** Empowerment Academy black sweater with the school's emblem or plain solid black sweater are permitted.

For Girls

- **Shirt:** Empowerment Academy purple polo shirt with the school's logo. The shirt is available in short and long sleeves. Shirts must cover the body without falling off the shoulder or exposing the torso. No undergarments should be seen. A solid white or black undershirt may be worn under the uniform shirt so long as it is not visible. Uniform shirts must be tucked in.
- **Pants/shorts:** Standard khaki-colored or tan pants or shorts. The pants need to fit correctly (no baggy style) with a belt. Shorts must be no more than two inches above the knee.
- **Skirts:** Standard khaki-colored or tan skirts. Shorts and skirts must be no more than two inches above the knee.
- **Shoes/Sneakers:** Shoes or sneakers must be a solid black and closed-toe due to safety. There should be no embellishments or visible logos. No boots, no sandals, no flip-flops,

no wheels, and no bells/lights/whistles are permitted. The shoe policy is the same in the winter months. Students must have on sneakers or shoes. If they wear boots to school they must change into the proper footwear before breakfast. On P.E. days, students should wear solid black sneakers.

- Socks with pants: Solid black, brown, navy, or white socks may be worn. Girls may wear tights. The tights must be solid purple, black, or white, or navy (no exceptions). No patterned tights or leggings are permitted.
- Sweater (Optional): Empowerment Academy black sweater with the school's emblem or solid black sweater is permitted.
- Hats, bandanas, scarves, and sunglasses may *not* be worn during school hours.

For Boys & Girls

No large or distracting jewelry is permitted. Hair should not be distracting in color designs or cuts. Make up is not permitted. Nail polish should not be distracting in the classroom and should be neutral colors only. This is up to the discretion of the administration. Backpacks with wheels are not permitted.

Physical Education Uniforms

- A purple T-shirt with our logo, which can be purchased at Jay's Uniforms located at 540 Westside Avenue in Jersey City, should be worn.
- PE pants can be purchased at the uniform store. Students can also wear plain black sweatpants *or* black gym shorts in warmer weather. There can be no visible logos. All shorts must be longer than the child's fingertips when their hands are placed at their side.
- Sneakers. Any solid black sneaker is acceptable, but we recommend against basketball shoes which will hinder movement for some activities. (Students wearing shoes on P.E. days may be asked to sit out of P.E. class for safety reasons.)

DISCIPLINE

Safety, order and discipline are fundamental 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 school 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 or supervised activity.

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 on foot, or via train, bus, or car). Such disciplinary action may include but 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.

Our Positive Approach to Discipline

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

Our Dean of Students is the point person on discipline issues. The Head of School and Dean of Students have the authority to decide on the appropriate consequences for student behavior, but work closely with teachers, families, and students to help them learn and grow.

Expectations for Time on Task

Empowerment Academy Charter School does not tolerate classroom distractions because of its belief that one or two scholars should not 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), and parents/guardians should expect regular calls from and conferences with faculty and staff so that an effective behavior plan might be implemented that solves the problem.

Zero Tolerance for Fighting or Intentional Physical Contact

There is zero tolerance for fighting at Empowerment Academy. In almost every case, both scholars will be suspended. Parents will be required to come to school to pick up the scholar involved in the fight on the day of the incident, and to meet with school administrators regarding the conflict. The school encourages non-violent conflict resolution. Scholars are expected to use the techniques of conflict-resolution to settle all disputes in a non-violent manner and report conflicts to staff members before they escalate.

Disciplinary Actions

Empowerment Academy has school wide guidelines in place that govern in-class learning and behavior expectations, and for the consequences of violating these guidelines, to ensure that disciplinary actions are consistent. Disciplinary actions other than suspension or expulsion, etc., can include, but are not limited to:

- Exclusion from non-core classes
- Being Sent To The Office
- A Call To Parents/Guardians
- An Administrator/Parent/Scholar Conference
- An Administrator/Scholar Conference
- The Implementation Of A Behavior Plan
- Before Or After-School Detention
- Alternative Volunteer Service
- A Behavior/Academic Contract
- A Counselor/Parent Conference
- A Counselor/Scholar Conference
- A Counselor/Teacher Conference
- A Social Worker/Counselor Referral
- A Homeroom Switch
- In-School Suspension
- Loss Of Incentives
- Lunch Detention
- Parent Shadowing
- Peer Mediation
- Reflection Form
- Reprimands And Warnings
- Restriction Of Participation In After School and/or Extracurricular Activities
- Schedule Adjustment(S)
- Time Outs
- Teacher/Parent Conference (E-Mail, Letter, Telephone)
- Teacher/Scholar Conference
- Removal From Additional Services Such As Buses Or Intensives

- Removal from Field Trips
- If on-going: Retention

In addition, scholars may be subject to any of the disciplinary actions listed below.

Scholars who put the safety of themselves or others in danger may be suspended immediately. Should a parent/guardian refuse to pick up a child who is safety risk, the school reserves the right to contact outside services.

In-School Suspension and/or Dean's Office

In-School Suspension is used when a child continues to misbehave or disregards the expectations outlined in the *Handbook*. While on in-school suspension, we hope to remove all distractions so that the child can focus strictly on academics. The parents will be notified when the decision to invoke in-school suspension is 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 on 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 recess, PE, Art, Music or Spanish class
- Participate in after-school sports, music, or enrichment programs

Sample Causes of Possible Suspension

- intentional, non-permitted physical contact of another person
- taking property that does not belong to you
- excessive and ongoing disruptive behavior
- excessive and ongoing defiant behavior
- intentional violation of Empowerment Academy's Core Values
- excessive and ongoing disrespectful behaviors
- violation of the school's technology
- defacement of school property
- truancy and/or numerous tardy arrivals
- possessing, using, or dispensing controlled substances or a weapon
- repeated uniform infractions
- excessive incomplete Life's Work or habitually coming to school unprepared
- failure of parent to live up to the requirements of our handbook
- academic integrity violations

Procedures for Short-Term Suspensions

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 charge(s)
- Accept information from the scholar and other persons who have knowledge of the incident. The scholar involved shall have the opportunity to express his/her side of the problem.
- Determine the accuracy of the charge(s) based on this information.
- A short-term suspension shall be imposed solely at the discretion of the Head of School or the Dean of Students based on the information gathered.

Implementation

Once the Head of School or Dean of Students have 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.
- Send written notification, by the end of the school day when possible, to the parent or guardian, or arrange for notification to be hand-delivered or sent certified mail within 24 hours informing him or her of the suspension, the reason for the suspension, the length of the suspension, the right to appeal, and the scholar's right to return to school at the end of the suspension, and any conditions for that return (a reentry conference is mandatory). A copy of this notification is filed in the scholar's cumulative folder in the school.

Right of Appeal

A parent or guardian may make a written request to the Head of School to appeal a short-term suspension within twenty-four hours of receiving notification of the suspension. The Head of School 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 Head of School. 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 Head of School 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 is upheld and the parent or guardian wants to continue the appeal process, the parent or guardian may make a written request to the Empowerment Academy Discipline Committee, within two days of receiving the Head of School's 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 is upheld and the parent or guardian wants to continue the appeal process, the parent or guardian make 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 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 the suspension, the suspension shall be imposed, and such decision will be final.

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.

When a scholar commits an offense that is eligible for long-term suspension or expulsion, the school shall pursue the following steps:

Investigation

- Notify the scholar of the charge(s)
- Accept information from the scholar and other persons who have knowledge of the incident. The scholar involved shall have the opportunity to express his/her side of the problem.
- Determine the accuracy of the charge(s) based on this information.
- Send written notification, by the end of the school day when possible, to the parent or guardian, or arrange for notification to be hand-delivered or sent certified mail within 24 hours informing him or her of the disciplinary infraction, the date and time for the Suspension or Expulsion Hearing, the right to appeal the outcome of the Suspension or Expulsion Hearing, and the scholar's status pending the hearing. A copy of this notification is filed in the scholar's cumulative folder in the school.
- The Head of School will schedule the Suspension or Expulsion Hearing within two days of the disciplinary infraction. 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 with 24 hour advance notice if legal counsel will be present. The hearing will be conducted by the Head of School. 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 Head of School will notify the parent or guardian of the discipline decision within 24 hours of the Suspension or Expulsion Hearing.

Implementation

Once the Head of School or Head of School's Designee have determined that a long-term suspension or expulsion 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.
- Send written notification, within twenty-four hours of the Suspension or Expulsion Hearing to the parent or guardian, or arrange for notification to be hand-delivered or

sent certified mail within 24 hours informing him or her of the suspension, the reason for the suspension or expulsion, the length of the suspension, the right to appeal, and the scholar's right to return to school at the end of the suspension, and any conditions for that return (a re-entry conference is mandatory). A copy of this notification is filed in the scholar's cumulative folder in the school.

Right of Appeal

A parent or guardian may appeal the decision of long-term suspension or expulsion within two days of being notified of the long-term suspension or expulsion. The parent or guardian may make a written request to the Empowerment Academy Discipline Committee, 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 with 24 hour advance notice 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 is upheld and the parent or guardian wants to continue the appeal process, the parent or guardian may make a written request to the Empowerment Academy Board of Trustees, stating why the suspension should be reversed or modified within two days receiving the Empowerment Academy Discipline Committee Appeal Hearing decision. The Hearing Officer will schedule the Appeal Hearing within two 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 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 the suspension, and a parent or guardian wants to appeal the decision further, the parent or guardian may appeal the decision to the New Jersey Commissioner of Education.

Make-Up Work for 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 two-week increments, and scholars must complete and return work before receiving additional work. All IDEA mandates will be followed for scholars with disabilities.

Participation at School and School-Related Activities

Scholars who have been suspended from school shall not be eligible to participate in any school functions for the entire period of their suspension.

Repeat Offenders

Scholars who continue to receive suspensions, whether in school, short, or long term may be expelled from Empowerment Academy. 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, and the potential development or revision of a behavior plan, will be adjusted appropriately.

Loss of Privileges

Empowerment Academy Charter School offers scholars many privileges that can be taken away as a consequence for poor behavior. Privileges that can be lost include: specials, choice time, participation in birthday celebrations, participation in field trips, coming to school early or staying late, participating in after school activities, use of school transportation, and socializing with classmates during snack time, breakfast, or lunch.

Detention/Reflection Time

Detention or reflection time may also be assigned a scholar as a consequence of poor behavior. Detention or reflection time may occur after school, during lunch, or on Saturdays.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE POLICY

Empowerment Academy Substance Abuse Policy

Any student who is suspected to be under the influence of a controlled substance will be required to have an immediate physical examination and drug test by a physician. If a student's parent cannot arrange an immediate examination then the school will take the student to the school's physician. The student will also be subject to suspension for up to 24 hours while the school determines the results of these tests. If the test results are positive then the student will have to have an evaluation and assessment done by a drug and alcohol counselor to determine the nature and severity of the problem. The student must then follow the given recommendations and treatment in order to continue at Empowerment Academy Charter School. Violations may result in expulsion. Selling or use of controlled substances on school property may also result in expulsion.

SCHOOL SEARCHES

Empowerment Academy Charter School authorizes the Head Dean (Empowerment Academy's Head of School) and the Head Dean's 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 Charter School'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 POLICY

Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying Reporting and Procedural Requirements

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 Head of School 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 Head of School within two days.
- The Head of School or Head of School's 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 Head of School or Head of School's designee must initiate an investigation of the incident within one school day of the report.
- The school HIB Coordinator conducts the investigation.
- The investigation must be completed as soon as possible, but no later than 10 days after the Head of School had 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 or incidents.
- Parents of student 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 may also hear from the HIB Coordinator at the hearing.
- At its next meeting, the board must issue a written decision affirming, rejecting, or modifying the Head of School's 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.

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 discipline in accordance with school policies, procedures, and agreements.

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 of School or the Head of School’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.

Investigation

The HIB Coordinator is responsible for determining whether an alleged act constitutes a violation to this Policy. The HIB Coordinator shall conduct a prompt, thorough and complete investigation of the alleged incident with 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.

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 or 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 Head of School, 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 incidences, or past or continuing patterns of behavior, and the context in which the alleged incident(s) occurred.

Empowerment'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 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 Head of School 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 Head of School 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 Head of School 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 occurs 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 Charter School 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.

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, or follow basic rules of safety will not be eligible to participate.

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 will be required to attend a Chaperone Meeting with the Dean of Student's or Dean's designee if you plan on chaperoning. If you do not attend the meeting before the trip, you cannot chaperone.

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 only their assigned bus and board and disembark at their assigned stops. Any changes in these assignments must be approved in writing by school administrators who will inform the bus driver of the change. Changes may or may not be possible due to bus capacity and routing. Any request for changes from parents may take up to 7 working days for change confirmation.

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 driver or any bus attendants shall report to school administrators any misconduct on the bus or any violation of the driver's instructions. The Head Dean (Empowerment Academy's Head of School) or the Head Dean's designee may take action on any misconduct, which occurs on a school bus, the same as if the violation had occurred on school grounds.

Scholars who fail to comply with the rules may be suspended and/or removed indefinitely from receiving bus service if the violation warrants.

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.

The trading of lunch items among scholars is not allowed. Many children have serious allergies. A table is provided for those scholars who are allergic to peanuts or have other serious allergic reactions to food. Make sure all food allergies are not only communicated to the teacher, but directly to the school nurse. Proper documentation from the doctor may be necessary.

Carbonated beverages, glass bottles, candy, and other items containing excessive sugar are not considered nutritious. It takes constant awareness on everyone's part to help scholars develop nutritious eating habits. Please be health conscious when preparing your scholar's lunch. And please, no gum.

Scholars who are purchasing the school lunch must bring their money daily. Teachers will not keep track of money on a weekly or monthly basis. Please send your child in with an envelope or baggie clearly marked "LUNCH MONEY" with the child's name on the envelope.

Scholars become eligible for free or reduced price lunches by filling out a lunch application. *All families need to fill out the application, even if they do not wish to receive free lunch or purchase lunch.* **Please do so: the completion of these applications by all families helps our school qualify for federal aid.**

CELL PHONES AND ELECTRONICS

Scholars should not have electronic devices in school. Electronic devices include hand-held games and portable stereos (*iPods*). None of these devices are needed and often represent a distraction from successful academics and a serious atmosphere. In addition, these are items that 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 electronic devices that should not be in school in the first place.

We do understand the importance of parent communication with children after school hours. Any scholar who has a cell phone will be asked to turn it off and keep it in their backpack until dismissal. Please call the school office if you need to communicate with your child during school hours. Please note that lost or stolen cell phones are not the school's responsibility. Cell phones may be confiscated if not kept in the scholar's backpack or used at the appropriate time.

In the event that a scholar disobeys these rules and is seen with an electronic device or uses a prohibited electronic device in school, a staff member will confiscate it. It will be returned only after a parent/guardian has come to school to pick it up.

INTERNET AND COMPUTER 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.

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)

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, and children and parents are encouraged to share and 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 store-bought goodies, or goodies ordered through our Food Services provider, to be shared with classmates if the teacher is notified in advance. Please notify the teacher within 24 hours by writing a note or leaving a message. The treats must already be prepared in individual servings and be NUT FREE. Birthday celebrations shall not occur during instructional time and are scheduled at the teacher's convenience.

Birthday treats should be easy and quick to serve. Parents must provide plates, napkins, and utensils as necessary – Empowerment Academy will not provide these items. If you choose to bring ice cream, please bring individually wrapped ice cream treats. Helium balloons are not permitted since these often become stuck on the ceiling. Individual goodie bags are permitted as long as every scholar in the scholar's class receives one. Parents are not required to send birthday treats to school. Please do not distribute invitations to your child's out-of-school birthday party at school unless you are inviting the entire class or having a gender-specific party.

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, which are open to the public.

KEY CONTACTS	GO TO FOR
Classroom Teacher	Your scholar's teacher should be your first point of contact for all questions regarding academics and/or behavior. If your scholar's teacher cannot answer your question, or you do not have a satisfactory answer, please refer to the Dean of Students or Head of School.
Office Manager Ms. Sandra Browne sbrowne@empacad.org ext:1001	Call for Daily Student Absences (in addition to classroom teacher) Questions about lunch or the school calendar General day-to-day questions Messages for teachers
Enrollment Coordinator Mr. Bobby Seetaram bseetaram@empacad.org ext: 1002	Questions related to school registration and enrollment Questions related to student forms Visiting the school Daily changes in transportation needs email bus@empacad.org Update student and parent/guardian contact information Busing Questions/Concerns Enrollment in Morning Care or Aftercare
Director of Operations Mr. Duanne Moeller dmoeller@empacad.org ext: 1014	Questions related to school security Questions related to building or facilities
Dean of Students Mrs. Carly Gigl cgigl@empacad.org ext: 1012	Questions regarding student uniform Questions regarding student behavior & discipline (please address these concerns with the classroom teacher first) Questions regarding student culture Extended student absences
Special Education Teacher Mrs. Leanne MacDonald lmacdonald@empacad.org ext: 1005	Questions related to Special Education / IEPs
School Nurse ext. 1008	Questions regarding medical issues
Head of School Mrs. Rhema Stradford-Dai rdai@empacad.org ext. 1013	Questions regarding our academic program Questions regarding instruction / assessments Questions regarding staff/whole school culture Staff concerns (All staff at EA report to the Head of School) Parent Advisory Council

Appendix A

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, [in compliance with the Section 1118 of Title I, Part A of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act], 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 I 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;
 - o 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;
 - o Provide opportunities for parents to help them understand the accountability system (e.g., NCLB/State accountability system, student proficiency levels, Annual School Report Card, Progress Report,)
 - o 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 No Child Left Behind Act;
 - o 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;
 - o Translate all critical school documents and provide interpretation during meetings and events as needed; and
 - o Help organize a Title I Parent Fair/Event where all parents are invited to attend formal presentations and workshops that address their student academic skill needs and what parents can do to help.

Empowerment Academy Community Charter 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;
- Establishing a Parent Resource Center or lending library; instructional materials for parents.
- 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;
- Developing and distributing a school newsletter or web publication designed to keep parents informed about school activities and student progress; and
- 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 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act] 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 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act;
 - Support home-school relationships and improve communication by:
 - o Conducting parent-teacher conferences during the school year which the individual child's achievement will be discussed.
 - o 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;
 - o 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;
 - o 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;
 - o Involving parents in the planning process to review, evaluate and improve the existing Title I programs, Parent Involvement Policy and this Compact;
 - o Arranging opportunities for parents to receive training to volunteer and participate in their child's class, and to observe classroom activities;
 - o Advising parents of their right to file a complaint under the Department's General Complaint Procedures and consistent with the No Child Left Behind Title I requirement for Elementary 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:
 - o 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;
 - o Respond to surveys, feedback forms and notices when requested;
 - o Become involved in the development, implementation, evaluation and revision to the Parent Involvement Policy and this Compact;
 - o Take part in the school's PTO or serve to the extent possible on advisory groups (e.g., school Title I Parent Advisory Councils,)
 - o 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
- Support Empowerment Academy Philosophy of caring, sharing and community involvement to make my classroom, school and place I live a better place.

Appendix B

Admissions Policy

Applications for a school year will begin to be accepted by October 15th of the preceding school year. The initial application period will end on December 1st of the preceding schools year. If, on December 1st, 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 who complete the application, including providing proof of age and residence.

If, after the first application period, there are seats still available for the subsequent school year, the second application period will end on February 15. Subsequent application periods will end on the 1st of each following month. On each application period end-date, Empowerment Academy Charter School will admit all New Jersey-resident children who complete the application, including providing proof of age and residence, to the extent that there are seats available in the applicable grade. Following any application period 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 lead person 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 are/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 list waiting for a seat to open.

If a seat becomes available in a grade level where there is no wait list, the lead person 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 and grade of any sibling(s) applying to enroll. Each such card will have been placed into a grade and preference-specific drum. The drums 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 number 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 not 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 and email and will document these outreach efforts.

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.