



Parent and Student Handbook
2017 -2018 School Year

Policy # 6000-5

Approved by the Empower Board of Trustees

August 8, 2017

Table of Contents

SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY	5
VISION	5
MISSION	5
CURRICULUM	5
CHARACTERISTICS OF DUAL IMMERSION EDUCATION	5
PARENT INVOLVEMENT	5
CLASSROOM VISITS/VOLUNTEER HOURS	6
ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE FROM SCHOOL	7
ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES & POLICY	7
LATE ARRIVALS	8
EARLY SIGN-OUT PROCEDURE	8
MEDICAL APPOINTMENT	8
ILLNESS AND INJURY	11
HEALTH AND SAFETY	16
ACADEMIC PROGRAM	18
STUDENT WORK AND ORGANIZATION	20
DRESS CODE	20
STUDENT DISCIPLINE POLICY	22
MEALS ADVANCE PAYMENT POLICY	32
INFORMATION FROM A TO Z	34
VERIFICATION OF RECEIPT OF PARENT/STUDENT HANDBOOK	41

THE EMPOWER CHARTER SCHOOL TEAM

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Board Member's Name	Position on Board	Area of Expertise	Current Term Expires
Dr. Alessandra Wall	Board Chair	Child Psychology Fitness/Nutrition	June 2018
Marisa Alvarez	Secretary	Public Health ○ Latin American Studies	June 2018
Matthew Showley	Treasurer	Financial Planning Marketing	June 2018
James Melton	Trustee	Fitness/Coaching	June 2019
Danielle Baldwin	Trustee	Marketing	June 2018
Steven Baratte	Trustee	Communications	June 2019

HOW DO I CONTACT THE BOARD?

- Leave a letter to the Board in the drop-box located at the school office.
- Send an email to the Board at board@empowercharter.org
- Attend Board Meetings. Meetings and agendas are generally posted online, and announced in the school newsletter.

SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY

VISION

We will empower a generation of creative thinkers and effective communicators who lead healthy and fit lifestyles.

MISSION

Our caring school community will provide students from all backgrounds with an educational experience that honors multilingualism, critical thinking, and fitness. Our students will explore and question in a writing-centered, creative, and collaborative learning environment.

CURRICULUM

Empower offers a dual language Spanish program that is inquiry-based, which leads to high levels of student engagement. Teachers create thematic units aligned to state standards that integrate the arts, technology, and health. Students participate in a robust fitness program every full school day. Our school also teaches character and leadership development.

CHARACTERISTICS OF DUAL IMMERSION EDUCATION

The dual language immersion program promotes bilingualism and bi-literacy in English and Spanish and prepares students to excel in the global marketplace. Our goal is for students to attain fluency and literacy in both English and Spanish and become proficient in academic standards. Students learn to think, speak, read, and write in both languages and develop positive cross-cultural relationships.

Empower's dual language program begins with a greater amount of Spanish in the early years in order to provide a solid foundation for future academics. This program is modeled after similar programs throughout the United States and Canada with proven success.

The percentage of Spanish and English instruction is as follows:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Spanish</u>	<u>English</u>
K-1st	80%	20%
2	70%	30%
3	60%	40%
4-6th	50%	50%

During the 2017-18 school year, students in Kindergarten through Fourth Grade will participate in the Spanish Immersion program as described above. Students in grades 5-6 will participate in a Spanish Elective class 50 minutes twice per week. This way, all students participate in our school's vision to become global leaders.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Every family is encouraged to volunteer 10 hours per academic year. Such activities may include copying, grading, filing, chaperoning, teaching/demonstrating, assisting, repairing, painting, or sharing of special talents. Such service may take place during the school day, evenings, or even on weekends. Please consult your child's teacher or office staff for available opportunities. Families are responsible for recording their service hours in the school office. Parent volunteers are required

to follow the Volunteer Code of Conduct, and comply with any TB testing or other background screening requirements as determined by the Empower Charter School Board of Trustees.

CLASSROOM VISITS/VOLUNTEER HOURS

PROCEDURES FOR CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

1. Classroom observations must be planned in advance so as to not create conflict with the teacher and student schedule. Therefore, please arrange a mutually agreed upon date and time with the Executive Director and teacher by making a written request at least 48 hours in advance of the requested observation.
2. Observations are limited to twice per month for no longer than sixty (60) minutes per visit in order to avoid distraction and/or disruption to the teacher and classroom schedule. However, under certain circumstances, such as evaluation, upcoming IEP meeting, crisis intervention etc., a parent/guardian or provider may request additional observations. Under these circumstances, the Executive Director will use his or her discretion to approve or decline such requests.
3. Formal classroom observations do not include times when parents/guardians are invited to school for a special event or presentation, to serve as a volunteer, or to enjoy lunch with their student.
4. The Executive Director reserves the right to decline any request for a classroom observation or to terminate a classroom observation if it is determined that such an observation would or has caused undue disruption in the educational process.
5. For security reasons, all visitors are required to sign in at the school office, wear a visitor's badge, and indicate the name of the teacher and destination before proceeding to the classroom. All visitors are asked to sign out when leaving the school.
6. To protect the learning environment, only one parent/guardian or outside provider may be in the classroom during an observation. Any additional observer must be approved by the Executive Director and observers who are not a student's parent/guardian must have written consent from the observed student's parent/guardian describing the reason for the observation.
7. Out of respect for the teaching environment, parents/guardians may not bring younger siblings or other children while observing in the classroom and may not utilize any electronic equipment such as cell phones while in the classroom. Observers should not disrupt the learning environment by engaging students or the teacher in conversation. A follow-up meeting may be scheduled as needed to answer questions or concerns.
8. During any observation, the Executive Director or his/her designee may be present in the classroom as well.
9. Parents/guardians or outside providers that disagree with any decision of the Executive Director regarding classroom observations have the right to challenge the decision with the School Board of Trustees at the next scheduled Board meeting. The Board's decision shall be final.

10. No electronic listening or recording device (including video) may be used in a classroom or learning space without the teacher and Executive Director's permission. (Education Code 51512)

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE FROM SCHOOL

- **Students are not allowed on school grounds before 7:00am.** They must be lined up with their classes at 8:15am.
- A child arriving to school after 8:15am is considered tardy.
- All parents and visitors must sign in, in the office, when arriving on campus and wear a visitor's badge if they plan to remain on campus.
- Children over 12 months of age and who are walking will not be allowed on campus during school hours with the exception of any awards assembly or school event. **Parents must supervise their children during these times and may not allow them to run around and/or play on the playground equipment.**
- Any student leaving the school grounds before dismissal must be signed out by the parent or authorized adult. Please minimize classroom interruptions by making doctor appointments after dismissal.
- No skates, rollerblades, shoes with wheels (i.e. Heeleys), skateboards, or scooters may be ridden to school or on the school grounds.
- If you would like to authorize your 5th or 6th grader to ride their bicycle to school, please see the Executive Director for requirements.

ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES & POLICY

At Empower Charter School, attendance is a priority because it is crucial to your child's academic success. Empower is a school of choice. Families who actively choose to enroll their children in the Empower Charter School have opted for an educational program that focuses on hands-on, inquiry-based learning, a dual language Spanish program, and a fitness program. This cannot be duplicated outside the classroom environment, which makes your child's daily attendance even more critical for success.

Absence from school hurts not only the student, but also the class. The success of the Empower Charter School environment relies partly upon the strength of the learning community that is developed. When the student is not in school, (s)he is missing out on critical classroom experiences, and the student's classmates are missing out on her/his contributions to the classroom community.

All portions of the school day are equally important to the student's growth and mastery of learning. When students are late to school, they create classroom interruptions, which in turn result in an unsettling experience and loss of learning for the student and her/his classmates. Early departures can also adversely impact the student's success and ability to be a contributing member of the learning community.

Finally, California is a compulsory education state. State law requires parents/guardians of children ages 6 to 18 to send their children to school. Parents who fail to meet this obligation may cause their student to be classified as truant.

Empower acknowledges the need for family time and for times of rest and rejuvenation. The administrative team has taken this into account in planning the school calendar and has included well-considered break times throughout the year. Please refer to the school calendar as a planning guide so that your child is able to be in school each day and receive the maximum benefits of regular participation in his/her classroom.

If a family circumstance arises which impacts your child's ability to be at school, please let your child's teacher or Administrative Assistant know so we can set up an independent study contract. Independent study contracts can be set up for one or more days missed, but need to be arranged in advance. Setting up the independent study contract helps ensure your child keeps up with the learning and also helps the school with funding for attendance. Independent Study Contracts are described in further detail.

Whether the absence is excused or unexcused, the state only provides daily funding to the school if a student is actually at school or an independent study contract was arranged.

LATE ARRIVALS

Students arriving to school after 8:15 A.M. must report to the Main Office and obtain a late pass prior to going to class. Students will not be allowed in the classroom without this pass. Parents of students of grades Kindergarten – Third Grade should accompany their students to the Main Office to obtain a late pass. Please support your children by arriving to school on time and establish promptness in their daily schedules.

EARLY SIGN-OUT PROCEDURE

Students will be allowed to leave school only with a parent or legal guardian, or with another person designated in advance by a parent or legal guardian. Any person picking up a student early must sign a log at the Main Office. The school will not accept notes or telephone calls to request early dismissal. Please make every effort to schedule appointments after 2:15pm.

MEDICAL APPOINTMENT

Parents should schedule children's medical appointments after school whenever possible to minimize the students' time away from school. If appointments are made during the school day, parents must come to the Main Office and sign-out their child. Students should remain in school before and after all appointments.

Reporting Absences

- All absences and late arrivals must be verified by a parent/guardian within 3 school days of the last day of the student's absence. Absences remaining unverified after 3 school days will be recorded as unexcused.
- The following methods may be used to verify absences:
 - Phone
 - Written note from parent/guardian
 - Email from parent/guardian

- The information below must be included during verification:
 - Notification date
 - Student's full name
 - Teacher's name and grade
 - Date(s) of absence
 - Reason for absence
 - Name and relationship of the person notifying the school.
- Each day, the school will attempt to verify unresolved absences with a phone call to contact parents/guardians. It is the responsibility of the parents/guardians to contact the school as outlined above.
- When arriving late or departing early, the parent/guardian must sign in through the school office and obtain a tardy slip to admit the child to class or an early release slip to indicate to the teacher that you have already signed the child out for the day. Once the child has been signed in, the child may proceed to class. To limit classroom disruption, once a child has been signed out, an office staff member will send for your student to meet you at the office.
- When students must be signed out by a parent or guardian or by a responsible adult who has been pre-designated by the student's parent/guardian. Empower cannot allow children the liberty to leave campus during the instructional day without properly designated adult accompaniment.

Absences Allowed by Education Code Law (Ed. Code § 46010, 48205)

- Under California law, excused absences are only designated for:
 - Student illness: A child is too ill to attend school if he or she has a contagious condition, a temperature of over 100, symptoms of vomiting or diarrhea, or written orders from a doctor to stay at home. If the child is ill 3 or more consecutive days, the school will require a note from a physician documenting the child's illness and the necessity of having the child stay home from school. Illness of other family members does not result in an excused absence for the student.
 - Health/medical quarantine as may be designated by the school, county health department or medical professional.
 - Medical appointments or services lasting all day.
 - Failure to provide proof of immunization for school enrollment.
 - Attending the funeral of an immediate family member to include the student's parent or legal guardian, sibling, grandparent, or any relative living in the household of the student. In such circumstances, one day is allowed; or three days are allowed for travel outside of California. The principal or designee may use their discretion to extend the length of an excused absence for bereavement.
 - Upon request by the parent/guardian and the approval of the principal or designee, justifiable personal reasons including but not limited to:
 - appearance in court by student
 - attendance at a funeral service
 - observation of a holiday or ceremony of his/her religion.
- Excused tardies are only designated for medical appointments that cannot be scheduled outside of school hours.

All other absences or late arrivals are classified as unexcused, even if the parent notifies the school.

Whenever possible, parents are encouraged to schedule medical/dental appointments and family business during school breaks, school holidays, and other non-school times. In the event an absence from school cannot be avoided, the best course of action is to stay in close communication with your child's teachers, and provide an opportunity for the child to make up any missed assignments.

Other Excused Absences: Contracts -- Independent Study (CIS)

Independent study contracts may be completed if the student will miss at least 1 school day. Requests to accommodate CIS are approved on an individual basis by the principal or designee.

- Extended educational experiences: To ensure that the student receives attendance and academic credit, the parent/guardian must confer with the student's teacher to receive the work assigned at least one day prior to the absence.
- Serious injury or illness: The principal or designee may request verification of students' condition by a physician. Students with mental health conditions must present verification from a physician and a treatment plan from their therapist. In such cases of medically related extended absence, the principal or designee may meet with the parent(s)/guardian(s) to determine the appropriateness of long-term individualized assignments.

ILLNESS AND INJURY

Students should not come to school when ill. If a student becomes ill or is injured while at school, a parent will be contacted to pick up the student. It is important that parents pick up their sick or injured child immediately for the care and comfort of the child and to maintain the health of other students.

The following symptoms are valid reasons to keep students at home:

- High Fever
- Nausea and Vomiting
- Evidence of a Communicable Disease
- Severe headache or severe stomach ache
- Spasms or Convulsions
- Any severe accident including deep cuts or bleeding
- Persistent Coughs
- Rash

Verification of Illness

The statewide average absence rate for typical childhood illness is 5 days per school year. Anytime a child has a doctor's appointment and/or documentation that requires the child to stay home from school, documentation must be provided to the school office within 3 school days.

These absences will be recorded as "excused" and will be taken into account when reviewing the child's total attendance record.

Students who are ill in excess of school guidelines may be required to bring verification of illness from a medical professional on their return to school. If the child is under the regular care of a physician for a serious or chronic condition, or is directed to stay home by a medical professional,

verification is to be provided to the school office at the time of the absence. Absences for excessive illnesses that are not verified with official documentation will be marked unexcused and may subject the student and/or parents to School Attendance Review Team (SART).

Chronic Illness

Personal illness which reoccurs on a frequent basis will require a doctor's certification.

If your child has a diagnosed chronic illness, you must provide a physician's authorization in order for these recurrent absences to be excused. Such authorization requires the treating physician to verify the diagnosis and list symptoms that would require the child to stay home from school but not necessitate an office visit. With this authorization, the parent may send a note when the child returns to school listing one or more of the symptoms identified by the physician's report. These absences will be considered excused. Please contact the school office for additional assistance.

Excessive Absence/Truancy Notification (Ed. Code § 48260, 48262)

While Empower maintains high expectations for student attendance, we also recognize that students may miss a few days/hours during the school year due to illness or family emergencies. For this reason, Empower has established guidelines for satisfactory student attendance. In the event that students fall short of these guidelines, written attendance letters will be sent to the student's parent/guardian.

These letters are to reinforce the parent/guardian's awareness of potential attendance problems and represent the first steps in the attendance review process. Subsequent portions of this process may include mandatory SART meetings, development of an attendance action plan, and attendance contracts. Please note that the school will take extenuating/emergency family circumstances into account when interacting with the SART.

If these remedies remain unsuccessful, the parent/guardian may be scheduled to appear before the district's School Attendance Review Board (SARB). A SARB panel is made up of representatives from the school district, along with members of public and community agencies that serve youth and families, such as police and probation officers, medical doctors and others. This panel examines the attendance situation and develops an individual plan with the student and family to end absences. This plan is a legally-binding contract, and the panel does have the authority to recommend a citation to court or referral to the Department of Probation for further attention.

Attendance guidelines have been established as follows:**Unexcused Absences**

An unexcused absence is an absence or tardy more than 30 minutes that is not defined as an excused absence.

- If a student incurs 3 unexcused absences, the parent/guardian will receive a letter documenting the child's attendance. An appointment or other form of contact will be made with the child's teacher to identify the cause of such absences and to discuss how the school can work with the family to support the child's success in school, including regular attendance.
- Upon incurring the 5th unexcused absence, the parent/guardian will receive a second letter documenting the child's attendance and an appointment with SART will be scheduled to discuss the child's continued absence and develop an attendance improvement plan for the student.
- Upon incurring the 7th unexcused absence, the parent/guardian will receive a phone call setting up a meeting with SART. At the meeting, a third letter documenting the child's attendance will be given. An attendance contract will be given as well.
- Upon incurring the 10th unexcused absence, the parent/guardian will receive the SART violation letter, indicating that the district may be contacted to set up a SARB hearing. Parent/guardian may receive notification for a SARB hearing, which states the student as a habitual truant and contains the scheduled appointment with the district SARB.

Total Absences (excused and unexcused)

- Once a student incurs 5 total absences, an initial letter will be sent to parents/guardians alerting them to their child's attendance record. The letter will request that parents/guardians contact their child's teacher to discuss the reason for these absences and to develop a plan for attendance improvement.
- After incurring 10 total absences, a second letter will be sent to parents/guardians requiring a meeting with the SART. A plan will be established to improve the student's attendance, and any subsequent absences for illness will require a doctor's verification.

The principal or designee can, at any time, request consultation and intervention by the SART for habitual absence or truancy issues.

Excessive Late Arrivals or Early Departures

As indicated throughout this document, attendance is an issue Empower takes very seriously. Students who are regularly arriving late to school or leaving early are also at risk of poor academic performance. For students who are habitually missing a portion of the instructional day, notification letters will be sent as outlined above, following the thresholds outlined below:

- Students incurring 6 tardies will receive an attendance update letter.
- Students incurring 9 tardies will receive a letter requesting a meeting with the child's teacher. An attendance improvement plan will be discussed.
- Students incurring the 12th tardy will generate the need for a review of parents' attempts to implement the attendance improvement plan as agreed by parents, teacher and principal. Upon recommendation of the principal, Empower's SART will become involved in the review of student attendance, which may include a meeting with the student's parents/guardians.
- Subsequent attendance issues may be referred to Empower's SART.

Families are also reminded that the Empower curriculum embraces a wide variety of integral subject matter and teachers spend a significant amount of time to ensure that all portions of the school day are equally important to the student's growth and mastery of learning. When a student leaves early, the student is missing out on integral learning experiences, which adversely impact the student's success and her/his ability to be a contributing member of the learning community.

Accordingly, if a student develops patterns of early departure, parents will be scheduled to meet with the teacher, principal, and the SART to develop an attendance improvement plan.

Again, our goal is to have your child in school for each full day of instruction.

Students Classified as Truant.

Truant students and their parents are in violation of California law and are subject to prosecution and other penalties. When school attendance is a problem, parents may be requested to accompany their child to school and attend classes with the child as a part of the student's attendance improvement plan. Parent participation in the child's classroom can reinforce understanding of what the child is missing each day that the child is not in school.

When a student is truant or has excessive absences, the parents and the child may also be required to meet with Empower's School Attendance Review Team (SART). This Review Team is appointed by the principal and may include the principal (or designee), a credentialed teacher, and attendance clerk. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the child's attendance record and to consider options for the child's regular participation in an educational program.

If a child's school attendance does not improve after such counseling or meeting, or if the parents

fail to attend a required attendance review meeting, the parents and the child may be referred to the district SARB. The parent is advised in advance that SARB has the authority to refer non-responsive cases to the District Attorney's Office for prosecution through the court system. Students 12 years of age and older may be referred to the Juvenile Court for adjudication.

First and foremost, Empower's goal is to educate children. We, and our students, cannot be successful in this endeavor if children are not in class on a regular basis.

Options for Students Unable to Attend School

Students who are unable to attend school for an extended period of time due to serious injury or illness may be eligible to receive independent study contracts during the period of absence.

Children who are absent due to shorter term illness should rest and recuperate so that they may return to school as soon as they are able. When reasonable, parents are encouraged to work with teachers to support the student's completion of missed work within a practical period of time. An independent study contract may be arranged.

While families are asked to arrange for vacations and non-medical absences during school breaks, holidays, and other non-school periods, if you know your child must be absent, please contact the teacher or principal in advance for assistance in obtaining makeup schoolwork for your child and arranging an independent study contract.

If your child is regularly unable to attend school or participate in scheduled classroom activities for reasons that are not health related, a conference should be scheduled between the parent and principal to determine if Empower is the most appropriate academic placement for your student.

Dis-enrolling Students

A student is dis-enrolled when a parent/guardian notifies the school that their child is no longer attending the school or if an official request for transfer is made by another school.

When students are not dis-enrolled as described above but stop attending, the office staff will take the usual steps outlined above to verify the absences. After 10 days of consecutive unverified absences and no communication from the parent/guardian, the student will be removed from the school roster. The date of dis-enrollment will be the student's last day of attendance at the school.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

ACCIDENTS

In the case of most minor scrapes and falls, a capable and caring staff member will treat students. Should the injury be determined to be serious, parents and/or those designated on the emergency cards will be notified as soon as possible. Emergency medical services will be summoned as necessary.

CAMPUS SECURITY

Empower students must remain on the school grounds during the day. This includes the lunch period. Empower students should not enter unsupervised areas.

CHILD ABUSE

In accordance with California State Law, our staff is obligated, under penalty of a fine or jail term, to report the reasonable suspicion of physical abuse, emotional abuse, emotional deprivation, physical neglect, inadequate supervision, sexual abuse, or exploitation.

CONTAGIOUS DISEASES

The following communicable diseases **must be reported to the school office**: chicken pox, pink eye, strep throat, measles, and lice. Please contact the school within 24 hours of diagnosis so that appropriate measures may be considered. Students must be cleared through the office before returning to class.

EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

State regulations require us to have valid emergency numbers on file for every student. Please make certain the office has a current phone listing for you and at least two emergency numbers in the event that you cannot be reached. Should any change occur, please notify the school office immediately of new telephone numbers.

Empower is committed to maintaining a safe and secure campus for all of its pupils and staff and has a comprehensive School Safety Plan which outlines and describes the school's policies for ensuring the security of the physical campus, responding appropriately to emergencies, and creating a safe and orderly environment that allows for learning. The School Safety Plan is available upon request at the school's main office.

HARASSMENT POLICY

In accordance with the laws of the State of California, Empower Charter School is committed to provide an environment free from harassment of any form. Harassment of any student by any other student, parent, or school employee is prohibited. The school will respond to allegations of harassment seriously and will review and investigate such allegations in a prompt, confidential, and thorough manner.

ILLNESS

Empower believes that it is not in the best interest of ill children to be sent home alone. If a child is determined to be too ill to remain at school, the office staff will notify the parents or designated emergency contact to pick up the child at school and transport him/her home.

IMMUNIZATION AND HEALTH REQUIREMENT

Each student is required to submit a Record of Immunizations in order to comply with the San Diego County Health Department regulations and to be in compliance with the State of California. Currently an immunization record must be submitted showing the individual shots and dates they were given.

Children entering kindergarten and transitional kindergarten should have:

- 5 DTaP - 4 doses meet requirement if at least one was given on or after the 4th birthday
- 4 Polio - 3 doses meet requirement if at least one was given on or after the 4th birthday
- 3 Hep B
- 2 MMR (1st dose on or after 1st birthday)
- 1 Varicella

PHYSICAL EXAM

California's Child Health and Disability Prevention (CHDP) program mandates that every child have a physical examination on file. This must be completed during the kindergarten year.

Parents/guardians needing assistance meeting the requirements can call 800-675-2229. You are encouraged to complete this exam at kindergarten entry to make sure your child is healthy and ready to learn.

K-1 DENTAL EXAM (OHA)

Effective January 1, 2007, an Oral Health Assessment (dental examination) by a licensed California dental health professional is required for children entering public school for the first time (at kindergarten or first grade). The Oral Health Assessment must be completed and returned to the school by May 31 of that first school year. Assessments done 12 months prior to school entry also meet this requirement. Obtain the form from the school or your dental health provider to complete.

Parents/guardians may sign a waiver of this requirement, which is found on the OHA form available at the school. There is no penalty or exclusion if this requirement is not met. The parent/guardian can call 800-675-2229 for assistance in finding a provider for the Oral Health Assessment.

MEDICATION

Any medication brought to school must be in original containers and accompanied by a note from the student's physician, complete with instructions for administering the medication. The note should include the name of the medication, method, amount, and time schedules by which the medication should be taken. There must also be a note from a parent consenting to the administering of the medication and providing a release for school personnel to consult with the student's physician if questions arise. All notes must be updated at least annually, and more frequently if the medication dosage, frequency of administration, or reason for administration

changes. The student must come to the Main Office to take the medication at the appropriate time. There is an *Authorization for Medication Administration* form available in the Main Office.

STUDENT OFFICE USE

- During class time, students must have a hall pass from their teachers to be admitted to the Main Office. Note that the office telephone is for emergency use only. If parents call the School to relay a message to his/her child, they should generally expect to leave a message with the Office Staff and it will be delivered to the child.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM

At Empower Charter School, we believe homework is an essential part of the education process. Homework contributes toward building responsibility, self-discipline, and lifelong learning habits. Homework is not new learning! It is the intention of the Empower staff to assign relevant challenging and meaningful homework assignments that reinforce classroom learning objectives. As appropriate, homework grades are modified based on students' individual needs (i.e. IEP, 504 Plans).

Furthermore, we feel that the responsibilities for homework are shared jointly among teacher, parents, and students. Parents please make sure that your child has a quiet place to complete homework without any interruptions. Students in third grade and above are asked to write their homework down in their agendas.

The main purposes generally associated with homework are as follows:

- To give students a chance to review and practice what they have learned
- To allow for more in-depth exploration of topics than is possible during class time
- To help students develop time management, study, and organizational skills
- To provide parents with insights into what is being taught in the classroom and the progress of their children

HOMEWORK TIME

Actual time required to complete assignments will vary with each students' study habits, academic skills, and course load. Students who do not finish classroom work may be asked to complete it at home, which could increase homework time. If your child is spending an inordinate amount of time on homework, parent(s) should contact their child's teachers. The following represents a suggested guide.

Grade	Suggested Time Schedule for Homework	PLUS	Recreational Reading
K	10-15 minutes	+	10-15 minutes
1	10-20 minutes	+	10-20 minutes
2	15-25 minutes	+	15-25 minutes
3	20-30 minutes	+	20-30 minutes
4	20-30 minutes	+	20-30 minutes
5	30-40 minutes	+	20-30 minutes
6	30-40 minutes	+	20-30 minutes

REPORT CARDS

Report cards are issued at the end of every trimester. The first two are given to parents during Parent Conferences, and the third is sent home on the last day of school with students. Report cards will include academic performance goals, study habits, citizenship, and teacher comments.

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES

Parent teacher conferences where parents are given a detailed assessment of their child's performance are held twice a year. During these conferences, parents have the opportunity to share their expectations, ask questions, and share any concerns they have about their child. Goals are established for the child (or by the child in collaboration with the teacher and parent in upper grades) and the teacher shares specific data regarding the child's academic and social skills. Throughout the school year, parents are always welcome to contact teachers to arrange a conference. Teachers may request a parent conference at any time as well. Please call the school or email teachers to set up a meeting.

PROMOTION/RETENTION

When a student's grades and test scores fall below the set standards, the teacher and administrator meets with parents to discuss recommendation for promotion or retention. The school will make every attempt to consult and work with parents to help support students' academic challenges throughout the year.

TESTING

Students at Empower are tested yearly using school and state-mandated assessments to measure student progress in the areas of reading, language and math. The following tests are administered over the course of the year, with parents notified of their results:

School

- Benchmark Tests in Language Arts and Math
- Student Oral Language Observation Matrix (Spanish Immersion students K-4)
- Running Records (assesses reading performance as a child reads from a book)
- Common Core MAP assessment in Reading and Math

State

- California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CASSP) – Math and Language Arts (Grades 3-8)
- California Standards Tests- (CST) for Science (grade 5 only)
- California English Language Development Test (CELDT) – English Learners only K-6

STUDENT WORK AND ORGANIZATION

Students should always strive to do their best on all of their work, at home and at school.

TEACHER ... PARENTS COMMUNICATOR FOLDERS

- Students in grades Kindergarten – 1st grade receive a communication folder where teachers will place school and classroom news. On the left hand side of the sheet, it is labeled “Return to School.” Papers requiring a parent signature or response will be placed on this side.
- The right hand side is labeled “Keep at Home,” these papers do not need to be returned and are for parents to be informed of upcoming events or student(s) progress.

STUDENT AGENDA

- Students in 2nd - 6th grade receive student agendas where they will write their homework down on a daily basis. These agendas are designed to help students learn to **organize** their assignments for each class every day. Some grade levels require parent signatures in student agendas to confirm that a parent has reviewed homework assignments. Grade levels requiring parent signatures will inform parents at Back to School Night.

MAKE-UP CLASS WORK AND HOMEWORK POLICY

If a student is absent it is his/her responsibility and expectation to make up missed work due to any type of absence regardless of the reason. Parents should call the office to ask for missed work. After asking for the homework, please allow at least twenty-four (24) hours for teachers to respond to requests. Please call first to check if the homework is ready. When ready, parents may pick up the assignments at the office. Any work not made up will count against the student’s grade.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION EXCUSES

Students are expected to participate in P.E. every day. A student may be excused from an activity if a parent has written and signed an excuse explaining the illness/injury. This excuse is valid for *no more than three consecutive days*. **To be excused for a period longer than three days, a written statement from the doctor is required.**

DRESS CODE

Pride in one’s appearance is important to fostering good self-esteem and a positive attitude toward school and others. Therefore, the students at Empower Charter School are expected to attend school in a clean and well-presented manner, wearing clothing consistent with the dress code policy. Parent adherence to the policy is important in fostering student responsibility, self-respect, and a sense of community. Parents’ consistent support of the charter rules and philosophy is very important.

Students must adhere to the school’s dress code policy as follows:

TOPS:

- Green, Light Blue, Navy Blue, Royal Blue or White
- Solid colored shirts, with sleeves and collars, for both boys and girls
- Turtlenecks, sweaters, sweatshirts, and vests may be worn if they are green, navy blue, black, or white.
- Empower spirit shirts and sweatshirts may be worn on Friday and are encouraged on

field trips.

- As long as shirts meet the Dress Code requirements, purchasing a shirt with the school logo on it is optional.

BOTTOMS

Pants/shorts/Skirts

- Shorts/skirts need to be no shorter than 2 ½ inches above the student's knee
 - Shorts or leggings should be worn underneath skirts for physical education class.
- Black or navy blue pants or shorts, appropriate for your child to participate in physical education.
- Pants/shorts may have a white line going down the side. White is the only color permitted.

SHOES

Tennis shoes/sneakers are recommended. **All shoes must have closed toe and heel.** No dress boots, high heels/platforms, flip-flop, sandals, or dress up shoes, please.

HAIR & GROOMING

Hair must be neatly groomed and styled in a way so that it does not interfere with the student's vision. No dying or use of colored gels on hair (temporary spray dye may be used during Spirit Week only). If earrings are worn, they must be post-style for safety reasons.

HATS

No hats may be worn on campus.

PIERCINGS

Wearing jewelry in eyebrow piercing, lip piercing, or more than one nose piercing stud is not permitted.

FREE DRESS DAYS AND SPIRIT DAYS

Throughout the school year there are certain days where students are able to participate in Spirit Days. Flyers will be sent home announcing Spirit Days and specifications. Shirts may not have spaghetti straps. Slits, tears or holes in pants or other articles of clothing are not permitted. Shoes should follow the dress code as well, unless otherwise specified.

The Executive Director may modify this dress code at any time in consideration of student safety and promoting a healthy learning environment.

VIOLATION OF DRESS CODE POLICY

A student who violates the dress code policy will receive a phone call and/or a written warning that must be signed by the parent.

If available, clothing may be “loaned” to the student to help him/her adhere to the dress code. “Loaners” must be returned to the office at the end of the school day.

Continuous violation of the policy may result in loss of privileges and/or a meeting with parent.

Special Note:

If students are dressed or groomed inappropriately, the teacher will bring it to his/her attention. If the student comes again to school dressed or groomed inappropriately, parents will be notified. There are resources at the school to assist families with dress code issues. Please call the office for assistance or questions. Although it is not possible to anticipate every style, trend, or haircut, unacceptable items not addressed in the dress code policy will be dealt with on an individual basis by the administrative staff along with the student's parent(s)/guardian(s).

HYGIENE

Personal hygiene is important for all students. Being clean and neat helps student(s) stay healthy, feel better, and work better at school.

The California Department of Public Health recommends that children with lice be allowed to remain until the end of the school day. This department also recommends against classroom or school wide notification, unless deemed necessary by the Executive Director. The Executive Director or designee may or may not allow a child with nits and/or lice to remain until the end of the school day. The decision is made on a case-by-case basis.

All children with lice or nits will be required to be picked up by the end of the school day.

If head lice become a persistent or reoccurring problem, clearance from the health department or other measures to address the situation may be necessary.

STUDENT DISCIPLINE POLICY

Empower believes that one of the major functions of education is the preparation of youth for responsible citizenship. Empower fosters a learning environment that reinforces self-discipline and the acceptance of personal responsibility. This policy has also been developed so teachers have guidelines and the support they need to teach efficiently. Finally, the school disciplinary policy provides parents with the knowledge that their student(s) will be treated fairly.

The policy works to ensure that:

- A safe and productive learning environment will be maintained for all individuals at school and at school related activities.
- Conflicts will be handled without the use of violence or threats of violence and with respect for the rights of all.
- Students and staff will be expected to be on task at all times while in the classroom or at other learning activities.

Discipline includes but is not limited to advising and counseling students, conferring with parents/guardians, detention during and after school hours, use of alternative educational environments, suspension and expulsion. This Policy shall be enforced fairly, uniformly, and consistently without regard to sex, ethnic group, religion, sexual orientation, color, race, national origin and physical or mental disability among all students.

BEHAVIOR CODE

Acceptable student behavior includes:

- Respect for self, all fellow students, all faculty, and all visitors to the school
- Courtesy in speech and manner
- Cooperation with all teacher, class, and school policies
- Self-control in dealing with others
- Concern for the safety and well-being of others
- Acceptance of responsibility for academic learning

The following behaviors are prohibited at school, at any school-sponsored activity or event (including but not limited to festivals, dances, fieldtrips), or while on a bus:

- Behavior that interferes with learning, including disrespect and failure to follow reasonable directions
- Damaging school property or the property of others
- Damaging or setting off a fire alarm (except in cases of fire on school premises).
- Dishonesty
- Distribution, use, access, upload, or download of vulgar, obscene, or threatening materials and/or graphics
- Fighting and/or play fighting
- Leaving a class or the school without permission
- Physical contact that is inappropriate.
- Possessing or using tobacco or any smoking paraphernalia.
- Possessing, using, selling, buying, giving away, bartering or exchanging any alcoholic beverage or illegal drug
- The misuse of technology (refer to Empower Student Internet Agreement).
- The sale, give-away, barter, exchange or distribution of any food, non-prescriptive or prescriptive drugs, materials, substances, toys, or other personal belongings without the consent of the principal or the principal's designee.
- Theft
- Littering
- Using inappropriate language, whether written or spoken
- Verbally or physically abusing teachers, administrators, students, or any other person, including but not limited to, acts of sexual harassment, threats, or intimidation

- Bus misconduct [for field trips/school sponsored trips]

BULLYING

Bullying is one of the most underrated problems in schools. Teachers, administrators, students, parents, and support staff need to work as a team to take action against bullying.

Bullying means any electronic, written, verbal, or physical act or conduct toward a student which is based on any actual or perceived trait or characteristic of the student and which creates an objectively hostile school environment that meets one or more of the following conditions:

- Places the student in reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or property;
- Has a substantially detrimental effect on the student's physical or mental health;
- Has the effect of substantially interfering with the student's academic performance; or
- Has the effect of substantially interfering with the student's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a school.

"Electronic" means any communication involving the transmission of information by wire, radio, optical cable, electromagnetic, or other similar means. "Electronic" includes but is not limited to communication via electronic mail, internet-based communications, pager service, cell phones, electronic text messaging, or similar technologies.

Harassment and bullying may include, but are not limited to, the following behaviors and circumstances:

- Verbal, nonverbal, physical or written harassment, bullying, hazing, or other victimization that have the purpose or effect of causing injury, discomfort, fear, or suffering to the victim;
- Repeated remarks, of a demeaning nature that have the purpose or effect of causing injury, discomfort, fear, or suffering to the victim;
- Implied or explicit threats concerning one's grades, achievements, property, etc. that have the purpose or effect of causing injury, discomfort, fear, or suffering to the victim;
- Demeaning jokes, name calling, stories, or activities directed at the student that have the purpose or effect of causing injury, discomfort, fear, or suffering to the victim; and/or
- Unreasonable interference with a student's performance or creation of an intimidating, offensive, or hostile learning environment.

POSITIVE DISCIPLINE MODEL

Empower Charter School staff and teachers will use positive discipline methods to create a caring school community and teach students effective behavior management skills. The positive discipline model is based on the work of Jane Nelsen, Ed.D and author of *Positive Discipline*. According to Dr. Nelsen, there are five criteria to ensure positive discipline is in place.

1. Helps children feel a sense of connection. (Belonging and significance)
2. Is mutually respectful and encouraging. (Kind and firm at the same time.)
3. Is effective long-term. (Considers what the child is thinking, feeling, learning, and deciding

about himself and his world – and what to do in the future to survive or to thrive.)

4. Teaches important social and life skills . (Respect, concern for others, problem solving, and cooperation as well as the skills to contribute to the home, school or larger community.)

5. Invites children to discover how capable they are. (Encourages the constructive use of personal power and autonomy.)

Teachers at ECS will create safe, inclusive learning environments that foster a sense of belonging and significance. Weekly class meetings will also help children feel ownership of their classroom because their thoughts and feelings will be regularly heard and valued. Class meetings will also incorporate character building activities to teach children about showing respect, cooperation, concern for others and problem solving skills. All teachers will be warm, yet uphold school wide expectations for behavior at Empower. When dealing with a situation, teachers will prompt students to think about and reflect on their choices. When students evaluate their behavior and feel like they have a voice, they are empowered to make better decisions and learn from their mistakes.

Empower has developed a process for handling student misbehavior in general. Strategies may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Individual conversation with the classroom teacher about behavior and consequences;
- Relocating the student's desk to a different part of the classroom;
- Assigning different or additional work appropriate to the infraction;
- Utilizing a peer mediation or student conflict resolution program;
- Restorative justice procedures;
- Utilizing a written referral framework;
- Designating selected classrooms and teachers as places for “time out;”
- Referring students to the Executive Director or a designee;
- Contacting parents/guardians; and/or
- Requiring the student to attend before/after school detention.

All Empower employees will report unmanageable or unusual behavior of students to the Executive Director as soon as possible. The Executive Director shall investigate the report and exercise his or her discretion for purposes of notification of parents, legal guardians, law enforcement, or local child protection services.

Corporal punishment shall not be used as a disciplinary measure against any student. Corporal punishment includes the willful infliction of or willfully causing the infliction of physical pain on a student. For purposes of the Policy, corporal punishment does not include an employee's use of force that is reasonable and necessary to protect the employee, students, staff or other persons or to prevent damage to school property.

SUSPENSION/EXPULSION

1. Grounds for Suspension and Expulsion of Students

Empower Charter School prefers to use research-based practices like participation in a Restorative Justice process and/or other logical consequences when the Executive Director or designee determines the situation allows for this approach.

While suspension and expulsion are to be regarded as a last resort, a student may be suspended or expelled for prohibited misconduct if the act is related to school activity or school attendance occurring at the school or at any other school or a school sponsored event at any time including but not limited to: a) while on school grounds; b) while going to or coming from school; c) during the lunch period, whether on or off the school campus; d) during, going to, or coming from a school-sponsored activity. Suspended or expelled students shall be excluded from all school and school-related activities unless otherwise agreed during the period of suspension or expulsion.

2. Enumerated Offenses

The chart on the following page describes the offenses that may result in suspension and expulsion. This list will be reviewed annually by the school community (parents, staff, and the governance board) and updated according to the specific needs of the Empower Charter School community.

SUSPENSION GUIDELINES

<i>Offense/Supplementary Information</i>	<i>Must Recommend Expulsion</i>
<p>1. <u>Assaults/Battery/Mutual Combat (<i>Discretionary Suspension</i>)</u></p> <p>a. Attempt/threatened to cause physical injury; mutual combat</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ injury or minor injury ▪ No malicious intent, honest misunderstanding ▪ Resolved after counseling with student and parent ▪ Includes verbal/written threats ▪ 1st offense for fighting ▪ 2nd offense for fighting ▪ 3rd offense for fighting (mutual combat only) (<i>discretionary expulsion</i>) 	
<p>b. <u>Willfully caused minor injury, except in self defense (<i>discretionary suspension</i>)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NOT mutual combat ▪ Minor injury, no cuts or bruises ▪ No or minor medical attention required ▪ Willful and unlawful force or violence upon another, clear aggressor. 	

<p>c. <u>Willfully caused serious injuries, except in self-defense (mandatory suspension)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Can include mutual combat ▪ Heavy bruises and/or cuts, broken bones ▪ Medical attention required ▪ Willful and unlawful force or violence upon another 	must recommend expulsion
<p>d. <u>Assault or battery on any school employee (mandatory suspension)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Must be a physical assault or battery 	must recommend expulsion
<p>e. <u>Sexual assault or sexual battery (mandatory suspension)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sexual battery is the unwanted touching of intimate parts for sexual gratification ▪ Sexual assault is rape or attempted rape 	must recommend expulsion
<p>f. <u>Aids or abets (discretionary suspension)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ inflicting or attempting to inflict physical injury ▪ Not a basis for expulsion 	
<p>2. <u>Weapons, Explosives, Dangerous Objects, Imitation Firearms (mandatory suspension)</u></p> <p>Possessed, sold, or otherwise furnished any firearm, knife, explosive, imitation firearm, or other dangerous object unless, in the case of possession of any such object, such students had obtained written permission from a certificated school employee with concurrence by the principal or designee:</p> <p>a. Possessed, sold, and/or furnished a firearm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Firearm (real gun, pistol, rifle, etc.) <p>b. Possessed, sold, and/or furnished a knife</p> <p>c. Possessed, sold, and/or furnished an explosive</p> <p>d. Possessed, sold, and/or furnished a dangerous object</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Possession of an imitation firearm, weapon, or other dangerous object. (M80, cherry bomb, or larger) <p>e. Brandished a knife</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Weapon with blade longer than 3 1/2" or folding knife with locking blade, or unguarded razor blade or fixed blade ▪ Threatening another individual with a knife <p>f. Possessed, sold, or furnished firecrackers or fireworks other than M80's or cherry bombs</p> <p>g. Possessed, sold or furnished imitation firearm</p>	must recommend expulsion for 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d, 2e, 2g

<p>3. <u>Controlled/Prohibited Substances (mandatory suspension)</u></p> <p>Unlawfully possessed, used, sold, or otherwise furnished, or was under the influence of any controlled/prohibited substance or substance in lieu of alcohol or intoxicant. Suspension may be waived by completing appropriate intervention contract.</p> <p>a. Possessed and/or used controlled/prohibited substance, alcohol/intoxicant b. Furnished or sold controlled/prohibited Substance, alcohol/intoxicant c. Possession of an amount for more than personal use d. Offered, arranged to sell, or sold Soma</p>	<p>a. 3rd offense- must recommend expulsion b, c, d- must recommend expulsion</p>
<p>4. <u>Substance in Lieu of Controlled Substances (discretionary suspension)</u></p> <p>a. Unlawfully offered, arranged, or negotiated to sell any controlled substance as defined in the Health and Safety Code, and then either sold, delivered or otherwise furnished to any person another liquid, substance, or material and represented the liquid, substance, or materials as a controlled substance.</p> <p><u>Example:</u> A student sells or furnishes another student a substance claiming it to be “LSD” or “marijuana”. The other student takes the substance. The substance turns out to not be what the first student claimed it was. That student provided a substance “in lieu of” the claimed substance.</p> <p>b. Delivered, furnished, and/or sold</p>	
<p>5. <u>Robbery/Extortion (includes attempts) (mandatory suspension)</u></p> <p>a. Robbery or extortion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Robbery is felonious taking of personal property in the possession of another against his/her will as accomplished by force or fear ▪ Extortion is obtaining of property of another with his/her consent induced by wrongful use of force or fear 	<p>must recommend expulsion</p>
<p>6. <u>Property/Damage (discretionary suspension)</u></p> <p>a. Attempted to cause minor damage b. Caused minor damage c. Caused major damage</p>	
<p>7. <u>Property/Theft (discretionary suspension)</u></p> <p>a. Attempted to steal property b. Stole c. Receipt of stolen property</p>	
<p>8. <u>Tobacco or Nicotine Product (discretionary suspension)</u></p> <p>Possessed, used, sold, or otherwise furnished a product with tobacco or nicotine. Suspension may be waived by completing appropriate forms.</p> <p>a. Possessed and/or used tobacco/nicotine product</p>	<p>4th offense- must recommend expulsion</p>

<p>9. <u>Obscenity (discretionary suspension)</u> a. Committed an obscene act b. Engaged in habitual profanity/vulgarity</p>	
<p>10. <u>Drug Paraphernalia (discretionary suspension)</u> Had unlawful possession of, or unlawfully offered, arranged, or negotiated to sell any <u>drug paraphernalia</u>. a. Unlawful possession b. Unlawfully i. Offered, arranged or negotiated to sell</p>	
<p>11. <u>Disruption/Defiance (discretionary suspension – students in Grades 4-6)</u> Disrupted school activities or willfully defied the valid authority of supervisors, teachers, administrators, school officials, or other school personnel engaged in the performance of their duties: a. <u>Minor disruption/defiance</u> ▪ Minor disruption of classroom or school-sponsored event ▪ Failure to follow teacher/supervisor directions ▪ Verbal abuse or defiance of teacher/supervisor b. <u>Major disruption/defiance</u> ▪ Major disruption of one or more classrooms and/or school sponsored event ▪ Verbal abuse or defiance of teacher/supervisor requiring assistance</p>	
<p>12. <u>Sexual Harassment (Grades 4-6)</u> a. <u>Verbal/visual (discretionary suspension)</u> Making signs and gestures and/or verbal statement that causes a negative impact b. <u>Physical contact (discretionary suspension)</u> Involving a physical contact of non-intimate parts of another in the act of harassment c. <u>Continual verbal, visual, or physical sexual harassment (mandatory suspension)</u></p>	
<p>13. <u>Hate Violence (Grades 4-6) (discretionary suspension)</u> Incident must be motivated in part or in whole by hostility toward a person's real or perceived disability, gender, nationality, race, religion, or sexual orientation. It must be intended to cause emotional suffering, physical injury, or property damage. a. <u>Mutual combat</u> ▪ Fight motivated by racial differences, real or perceived sexual orientation, or other hate related matters ▪ For non-hate-related mutual combat see offense number 1 b. <u>Offensive comment, intent to harm</u> ▪ Example: racial slur, derogatory comment about nationality, etc. c. <u>Use of physical force, minor injury</u></p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NOT mutual combat ▪ No or minor medical attention required; no cuts or bruises ▪ Willful and unlawful force or violence upon another; clear aggressor <p>d. Use of physical force, serious injury (<i>mandatory suspension, discretionary expulsion</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Can include mutual combat with serious injury ▪ Heavy bruises and/or cuts, broken bones; medical attention required ▪ Willful and unlawful force or violence upon another; clear aggressor <p>e. Threat of violence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Threat must be hate-motivated ▪ Vandalism or graffiti that is hate-motivated or conveys a racist or otherwise hateful message 	
<p>14. Threats and Intimidation (<i>discretionary suspension</i>)</p> <p>a. Witness intimidation using harassment and/or threat</p> <p>b. Threat of death or grave bodily injury against school official, or against school property damage of greater than \$1,000.</p> <p>c. Bullying (including electronic acts)</p>	
<p>15. Harassment (Grades 4-6) (<i>discretionary suspension</i>)</p> <p>a. Harassed, intimidated, or threatened a pupil or group of pupils or school personnel with actual or expected effect of: (1) disrupting class work; or (2) creating substantial disorder; or (3) creating an intimidating or hostile educational environment.</p>	
<p>16. Hazing (<i>mandatory suspension</i>)</p> <p>a. Engaged in, or attempted to engage in, hazing as defined in subdivision (b) of Section 245.6 of the Penal Code.</p>	
<p>ELEMENTARY LEVEL ONLY: Principal may follow In Lieu Of Expulsion Process for all listed offenses except for the following mandated offenses that require expulsion recommendation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Commit or attempt to commit sexual assault or sexual battery ▪ Possessed, sold, or furnished a <u>FIREARM</u> (real, not a replica), or explosives ▪ Brandishing a <u>KNIFE</u> ▪ Selling a controlled substance (does not include alcohol) 	

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

A student identified as an individual with disabilities or for whom Empower has a basis of knowledge of a suspected disability pursuant to the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act ("IDEA") or who is qualified for services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 ("Section 504") is subject to the same grounds for suspension and expulsion and is accorded the same due process procedures applicable to regular education students except when federal and state law mandates additional or different procedures. The School will follow Section 504, the IDEA, and all applicable federal and state laws including, but not limited to, the California Education Code, when imposing any form of discipline on a student identified as an individual with disabilities or for whom ECS has a basis of knowledge of a suspected disability or who is otherwise qualified for such services or protections in according due process to such students.

IN LIEU OF EXPULSION PROCESS FOR ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

Board members have expressed a desire to have consistency in suspensions and systemic procedures to ensure that elementary school students who commit serious offenses, but are not recommended for expulsion, receive appropriate interventions to address poor conduct.

Under CA Education Code, elementary school principals must recommend expulsion for students who commit the following mandatory offenses at school or at a school activity off grounds:

- Commit or attempt to commit sexual assault or sexual battery
- Possessed, sold or furnished a firearm (real, not a replica)
- Possession of an explosive
- Brandishing a knife
- Selling a controlled substance (does not include alcohol)

Elementary principals, however, have discretion to determine whether to recommend a student for expulsion if he or she commits a non-mandatory serious offense. For this process “serious offense” is defined as:

- Willfully causing serious injury, except in self defense
- Assault or battery on any school employee
- Possession, selling or furnishing an imitation firearm, knife, or dangerous object
- Third offense for possession, using, or being under the influence of a controlled/prohibited substance
- First offense for furnishing a controlled/prohibited substance
- Possessing an amount of controlled/prohibited substance for more than personal use
- Robbery or extortion
- Fourth offense for possession or using a tobacco or nicotine produce

Suggested interventions include:

- Daily parent contact
- Referral to district counselor or community agency
- Individual or small group counseling
- Growth groups
- Parent community system
- Parent education classes
- Behavior contracts
- Tutoring or other academic interventions
- Mentoring programs
- Review of IEP for special education students
- SST meeting
- Restorative Justice process

MEALS ADVANCE PAYMENT POLICY

PURPOSE AND APPLICATION

The Empower Charter School (“Empower”) Board of Trustees acknowledges that it is a steward of public money and that it is responsible for assessing and ensuring the financial viability of the charter school. It is the Board of Directors’ intention in adopting this policy to implement protocols that protect the charter school’s financial condition.

The purpose of this School Meals Advance Payment Policy (“Policy”) is to create a payment system which requires parents/guardians of Empower students to pay in advance for student meals that are purchased and/or provided by Empower (“school-provided meal”). This policy creates three meal options for parents/guardians: A) a 5-meal option, B) a 20-meal option, C) a 60-meal option. As of the effective date of this Policy, parents/guardians will be required to purchase one of these three options prior to their child being served a school-provided meal. Alternatively, parents/guardians may seek to participate in an “Alternative Option” if extenuating circumstances apply, as set forth more fully below.

This Policy applies to all “Paid Status” or “Reduced Lunch” status students. This Policy does not apply to “Free Lunch” students who are approved to receive free school-provided meals.

OVERVIEW

Parents/guardians must purchase one of the three meal options below for their child, or must arrange for a pre-approved alternative meal option with the Policy Administrator as set forth more fully below, prior to the first school-provided meal being served to the student. If a student requests lunch, but has not purchased one of the three options outlined in this Policy, the student will not be given a school-provided lunch. Empower will make its best efforts to offer snacks to students that do not receive school-provided meals, if available.

Parents/guardians may purchase any meal option set forth below by filling out and submitting a school meal purchase form, together with payment, to Empower’s administrative offices. The school meal purchase form is available at the main office.

Option A: 5-meal option. Parents and/or guardians may pay in advance for five (5) meals, to be used by the student at any point in the school year in which they were purchased. After the fifth meal is provided, the parent/guardian must purchase another option of meals prior to the next school-provided meal being served to the student.

Option B: 20-meal option. Parents and/or guardians may pay in advance for twenty (20) meals, to be used by the student at any point in the school year in which they were purchased. After the twentieth meal is provided, the parent/guardian must purchase another option of meals prior to the next school-provided meal being served to the student.

Option C: 60-meal option. Parents and/or guardians may pay in advance for sixty (60) meals, to be used by the student at any point in the school year in which they were purchased. After the sixtieth meal is provided, the parent/guardian must purchase another option of meals prior to the next school-provided meal being served to the student.

Alternative Option: Parents and/or guardians may request an alternative meal option upon written agreement with the Policy Administrator. Parents/guardians must request alternative options in writing, or by scheduling a meeting with the Policy Administrator. Alternative options will only be approved if extenuating circumstances apply. It is within the Policy Administrator's discretion to approve or deny a request for an alternative meal option.

Reimbursement of Unused Meals. Pre-paid meals that are not used by the end of the school year in which they were purchased will be reimbursed to parent/guardians upon request. Parents/guardians requesting reimbursements must make a request in writing to the Policy Administrator no later than ten (10) days after the last day of school. Parent/guardians will not be entitled to a reimbursement for pre-paid meals if he/she fails to request a reimbursement in writing within 10 days after the last day of school.

ADMINISTRATION AND OVERSIGHT

The Executive Director or designee (the "Policy Administrator") is the person in charge of the administration of this Policy and the implementation of processes and procedures to ensure that this Policy is followed. The Policy Administrator is authorized to: (i) approve or deny alternative meal options for parents/guardians upon request, (ii) make modifications to this Policy from time to time to ensure that it is in compliance with local, state and federal laws, (iii) annually review and, when necessary, make minor modifications or changes to this Policy's processes and procedures, and (iv) monitor compliance with this Policy.

It shall be the responsibility of the Administrator to inform employees and parents/guardians about this Policy, when applicable. All questions relating to this Policy should be directly addressed to the Policy Administrator.

INFORMATION FROM A TO Z

AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM

The after-school program is aimed at helping students academically and a place where students find a variety of extracurricular activities and lessons to develop many different skills and new knowledge. For more information and an application please see the office staff.

AWARDS

Empower takes great pride in recognizing and rewarding students for positive character and achievement throughout the school year. Teachers bestow Scholar of the Month Awards and Athlete of the Month Awards to those who have shown improvement, achievement, or outstanding character. Students with perfect or outstanding attendance are also recognized.

BIRTHDAYS

The faculty and staff are happy to recognize student birthdays. However, because student's learning time at school is very important, birthday celebrations may not be held during instructional time. You must make arrangements with your child's teacher in advance to coordinate any celebration to occur during your child's lunch time. We would also prefer that student(s) did not bring cake/cupcakes and rather student(s) purchase a book or game that the entire class can enjoy.

CALENDAR

A school calendar of events is sent home in the school newsletter. Updated information can also be found online at www.empowercharter.org

COMMUNICATION

Excellent communication with families is of paramount importance to us. We communicate regularly in a variety of ways:

- **NEWSLETTER:** The administrative newsletter informs parents of activities taking place at Empower and in the community.
- **WEBSITE:** Please visit our website for any updates, news and information: www.empowercharter.org.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES:

Students may bring cell phones or electronic devices to school.

Cell phones and media devices are to be turned off during the school day (7:00am to 2:45pm), unless the teacher has clearly stated students may use them for educational purposes or in the event of an emergency (i.e. earthquake, fire).

Cell phones and electronic devices being used without permission of a staff member may be confiscated. A parent/guardian may pick up a device that has been confiscated.

Bringing any cell phones or electronic devices are at the risk of the student. The school is not responsible for any lost or stolen equipment.

EMERGENCY CARDS

- It is very important to keep phone numbers and addresses updated on your child's emergency cards. When there has been a change to either, please let the office staff know.

EMERGENCY DRILLS

- Regular emergency drills are required by law and are an important safety precaution. It is essential that when the first signal is given, students obey orders promptly and clear the building by the prescribed route as quickly as possible. Students are required to remain quiet and attentive in order to receive necessary instructions. *Consequences will be assigned to students who do not follow the directions of any staff member.*

FIELD TRIPS

Students who plan to attend class trips/school field trips will need to submit permission slips provided by the classroom teacher.

Empower students will follow school rules at designated field trip locations.

- Empower students will listen and follow directions of parent volunteers, drivers and field trip coordinators during the duration of the field trip.
- Children who pose a safety concern may not be allowed to attend a field trip.

FORGOTTEN ITEMS/PARENT DELIVERIES

If a child forgets an item at home, parents are NOT permitted to bring their student forgotten items into the classroom. They may drop off forgotten items (including lunch) at the main office.

HEALTH OFFICE

The school health office provides emergency first aid to students for accidents or sudden illnesses occurring at school. Students must report to the health office with a teacher's note. Health office personnel will notify parents when students are ill; students are not to contact parents themselves. California State Law stipulates students enrolled in public school must have, on file, a record of immunization against polio, measles, mumps, rubella, hepatitis B, and TDaP. The school should be notified/informed of any physical condition that could have an effect upon the student's well-being and/or general health.

EMPOWER STUDENT INTERNET USE AGREEMENT

Access to the Internet will enable students to explore libraries, databases, and information resources. Parents/guardians should be aware that some material on the Internet may contain items that are objectionable or inaccurate. While our intent is to make Internet access available to further educational goals and objectives, students may find ways to access other materials as well. We believe that the benefits to students from access to the Internet, in the form of information resources, exceed the disadvantages. Students will be accessing the Internet in their classrooms and the computer lab with an authorized adult present for guidance. However, ultimately, parents/guardians of minors are responsible for setting and conveying the standards that their children should follow when using information sources. To that end, Empower supports and respects each family's rights to decide whether or not to apply for Internet access. The school or parent/guardian may revoke Internet access at any time.

Internet Access Rules: Students Grades K – 6

Students will sign a form that says:

1. I will follow the directions of my teacher/adult leader while at the computer.
2. I will not make copies of anything I find on the computer without adult permission.
3. I will keep my password private and not share it with anyone else. I will use only my password when I am on the computer. I will not ask or use anyone else's password. If I find out someone else's password I will tell that person and an adult so the password can be changed.
4. I will not use words, pictures, drawings, etc. that are not allowed at school or home. That includes drugs, threats, and unkind words.
5. I may not sell or buy anything on the computer
6. I will not give out my (or anyone else's) full name, address, or phone number to anyone without my parent/guardian and teacher's permission
7. I will treat the computer equipment and other users work carefully and not damage it in any way. I understand that if I do, I may have to pay for fixing the damage if it was done on purpose or when playing around.

I agree to follow the above rules and understand that if I break them I may not be allowed to use the computers again and may have other consequences.

ITEMS NOT PERMITTED AT ANY TIME

The following items are not permitted and will be confiscated.

In the case of electronic games and music players (i.e., iPod, MP3), parents must come to the office (after school) to sign for and retrieve the item.

- Permanent Markers or felt pens of any kind
- Liquid White Out
- Electronic games and music (i.e., DS, iPod, MP3)
- Aerosol/spray cans or bottles
- Hairspray
- Toys, stuffed animals
- Trading cards, Pokemon cards, etc.

LIBRARY

Students take regular walking trips to the local library to check out books. Students are not permitted to check out any materials on behalf of another student. The school is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged library books or any late fees that the library may charge.

LOST AND FOUND

Parents should be sure to have proper identification (student's first and last name) marked on articles of clothing and all personal property. The school is not responsible for lost or damaged articles. All lost items may be claimed before school, during nutrition or lunch, or after school. Stolen items should be reported immediately. All items not claimed at the end of each month will be given to charitable organizations.

MEDICATIONS

Medication forms, obtained from the office, are available for students who are required to receive medication, including over-the-counter medicines. A written request from the parent/guardian as well as from the doctor must be on file with the office.

Parents are to provide the necessary medication in the detailed pharmacy container with the student's full name clearly labeled. Any over-the-counter medication must be in the original packaging and clearly labeled with the student's full name. All medications must be kept in the office. *Students are not to be in possession of any medication while on campus.*

The school should also be notified if a student is on any regular medication regardless of whether it is administered at school.

*Cough drops, medicated or non-medicated are not allowed on school campus.

*Parents may come to the school office to administer medication.

PLAYGROUND RULES

Recess is a privilege that is earned through making appropriate choices and following safety rules. We at Empower desire our students to have a fun and safe recess, in order for this to occur, all students will observe these rules:

- Follow adult directions the first time given
- All food should be eaten at lunch tables. Food is not allowed on the playground.
- Students should play in the designated areas as indicated by staff.
- Use appropriate language: no put-downs or rude words or actions.
- Use playground equipment in the correct manner and for its intended use.
- Use restrooms as needed, but not as play areas.
- Line up quickly when the staff asks.

SNACKS AND LUNCH

Student snacks and lunches brought to school from home are kept in the classrooms or other designated storage area.

Please send a *healthy snack and lunch for your child*. Encourage your children to bring home any food they do not eat, so that you will know what they are eating. Please mark their lunches with

their first and last names. All students must eat snacks and lunches in the designated eating areas. Students MAY NOT EAT by classrooms or walk around campus as they eat. All trash should be thrown into a trashcan.

At Empower, we promote healthy eating habits. As a school rule, we do not allow candy to be eaten on school campus. Students are not allowed to sell candy at any time before, during, or after school.

We prefer that you pack healthy snacks like fruit and avoid unhealthy snacks like chips. If you do send your child to school with chips, they should be in a snack size bag (not the large bags). Any “hot” chips like Hot Cheetos are not allowed at school and will be confiscated if brought to school.

- Snacks: All children have a morning nutrition break. Children are encouraged to bring healthy snacks to eat at this time, i.e. fruit, crackers and cheese, etc.
- Lunch: Empower provides a lunch program for all students. Lunch may be purchased, or you may bring your own healthy lunch. The school also has a free or reduced lunch program for those families who qualify under federal requirements. Please see the office staff for further information.

We ask that you review the following lunch procedures with your child

1. Lunch bags and boxes should be labeled with students’ names.
2. **Food MUST be consumed at the lunch tables. no exceptions.**
3. Playground equipment (i.e. balls, jump ropes, etc.) is not allowed at the lunch tables.
4. Students must sit at designated tables while eating.
5. Students must sit for 15 minutes at their tables before being excused – no exceptions. Students may not walk or run with food in their mouth.
6. Students must keep hands, feet, and food to themselves.
7. To be dismissed after the first 15 minutes, students need to:
 - Make sure their area is clean
 - Remain seated
 - Wait to be individually dismissed by an adult
8. Students must throw trash in the appropriate trash containers when dismissed.
9. Students must walk from the lunch area to the playground after being dismissed.
10. Parents visiting during lunch may sit at their child’s assigned table as space allows and in accordance with any TB or Background Screening policies established by the Board of Trustees.

PETS

No pets of any kind are allowed at school without permission from the school. Teachers may give special permission for pets to be brought to school as part of a special display or activity if approved by administration. Under no circumstance is a potentially dangerous pet to be brought to school.

PARENT MESSAGES

One of our goals at Empower is to enable "teachers to teach, and students to learn." In order to accomplish that goal we are always looking for ways we can protect the valuable instructional time in the classroom from unnecessary interruptions. *Parent requests to get messages to their child or the teacher during the instructional day can have a significant impact on the teacher's ability to keep a class focused on instruction.* Therefore, we request that you help eliminate any unnecessary classroom interruptions.

- ❖ *Please do not call the office to relay messages to your child/ren unless it is an absolute emergency.*
- ❖ *Inform your children, before they leave for school in the morning, of any plans for after school that they may need to know such as:*
 - ❖ Who is picking them up after school?
 - ❖ Whom are they going to go home with?
 - ❖ Do they need to go to daycare today?
 - ❖ What are they to do if it rains?
 - ❖ Do they have their homework?

EMPOWER PARENT/TEACHER COMMITTEE

The Empower Parent/Teacher Committee has two primary objectives:

1. Build a strong relationship between the faculty, staff, and parents to insure a united effort to create the best learning environment for our children.
2. Raise funds that enrich and improve the quality of the educational environment for the children of Empower Charter School.

PICTURES/CONSENT TO PHOTOGRAPH

Members of the media, including newspaper photographers and television camera crews, may visit our campus during the school year to photograph and/or interview children. Parents are asked to fill out, sign, and return a permission slip so that your child may participate. Except for a media request on a controversial matter, which we would notify you separately, the permission will cover the entire school year. Your signature also permits Empower Charter School to use the photographs or interviews in our own publications and on our Internet web site.

SCHOOL SCHEDULE

Our school office hours are 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Empower's instructional hours are as follows:

- 8:15am-2:45pm Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday.
- Wednesdays are an early release day: 8:15am-12:30pm.

SELLING THINGS AT SCHOOL

Student(s) are not allowed to sell things like Pokemon cards, toys, Girl Scout cookies, candy bars, gum, or baseball cards to other students or teachers at school. Student(s) are also not allowed to trade or give away these things at school.

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Empower Charter School provides services of a Speech and Language Therapist, Occupational Therapist, an RSP teacher, and a school psychologist for students who qualify for these services. Students experiencing academic or behavioral difficulties may be referred to the Student Success Team. This team will meet with the student, parents, teachers, and counselor to discuss strategies and design an improvement plan that will help the student become successful. Teachers or parents may refer a student to the team at any time.

TEXTBOOKS

Textbooks are provided for each student as used in each content area. Damaged textbooks will be charged according to the damage; full replacement price will be charged for all lost textbooks.

TRAFFIC

It is quite busy during morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up with both students and vehicles. To reduce the congestion and make this area safe for our students, drive with caution and do not stop or block the entrance or exit.

VERIFICATION OF RECEIPT OF PARENT/STUDENT HANDBOOK & INTERNET AGREEMENT FORMS

Parents/legal guardians are asked to read and review this Empower Parent and Student Handbook with their child(ren) each year. It is important that parents and students understand the expectations and rules for the school. Your signatures will indicate that you have reviewed and discussed the Handbook together and that you join Empower in our efforts to keep your school safe and orderly.

If there is a conflict between the rules expressed in the Handbook and your child's planner or classroom rules, the rules expressed in the Handbook shall take precedence. Please contact the office staff if you have questions or need clarification.

Please remove, sign, and return this page to the Empower office staff within three (3) days.

To be completed by one parent or legal guardian for each family:

PARENT/LEGAL GUARDIAN SECTION FOR HANDBOOK AND INTERNET USE

As the parent/legal guardian of the student(s) signing below, I have:

- read the Empower Parent & Student Handbook, including the Student Internet Use Agreement in the Handbook,
- discussed its content with my child(ren), and
- grant permission for my child(ren) to access the Internet at School.

I understand that:

- the school's computing resources are intended for educational purposes only;
- it is impossible for the School to restrict access to the entire network;
- individuals and families may be held liable for violating the Internet Use Agreement.

Furthermore, I accept full responsibility for supervision if and when my child(ren)'s use is not in a school setting.

Parent/Legal Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

To be completed by students in Grade 3 or higher:

STUDENT SECTION FOR HANDBOOK AND INTERNET USE

- I have read the Empower Parent & Student Handbook and agree to abide by all its rules and regulations.
- I have read the Empower Student Internet Use Agreement in the Handbook. I agree to follow the rules contained in the user's obligations and responsibilities.
- I understand that if I violate the rules, my Internet access can be terminated and I may face other disciplinary measures.

Student Name: _____ Grade: _____ Signature: _____