



Parent and Student Handbook 2026/2027

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Dear Empower Academy Families,

Welcome to the 2026–2027 school year at Springs Public Schools Empower Academy!

As we begin our third year together, I am filled with gratitude for the incredible growth, accomplishments, and partnerships that have shaped our school community. What started as a vision to provide families in Rutherford County with a high-quality educational choice has grown into a thriving learning environment where students are challenged, supported, and empowered to succeed.

At Empower Academy, we remain committed to our mission of developing motivated and self-aware learners through personalized instruction. We believe every child deserves an educational experience that recognizes their unique strengths, encourages curiosity, and fosters academic excellence. Our dedicated staff works each day to create meaningful learning opportunities that prepare students for success both inside and outside the classroom.

As we enter our third year, we continue to strengthen our programs, refine our practices, and raise expectations for ourselves and our students. We are committed to maintaining a safe, respectful, and engaging learning environment where students are encouraged to demonstrate responsibility, integrity, perseverance, and kindness.

We also recognize that student success is built through strong partnerships between school and home. We value the trust you place in us each day and encourage families to remain actively involved in their child's educational journey. Together, we can ensure that every student has the support, encouragement, and opportunities needed to reach their full potential.

This handbook has been designed to provide important information regarding school policies, procedures, expectations, and resources. We ask that all families carefully review the contents and use it as a guide throughout the school year. Clear communication and a shared understanding of expectations help us maintain a positive and productive school culture.

Thank you for choosing Empower Academy and for being part of our growing school family. We are excited about the opportunities that lie ahead and look forward to another year of learning, growth, and achievement.

Together, we will continue building a school community where every student is empowered to learn, lead, and succeed.

With appreciation,

Shane Wickwire
Executive Director & Principal
Springs Public Schools Empower Academy

Site Mission & Vision

Our Mission

At Springs Public Schools Empower Academy, our mission is to develop motivated, self-aware, and academically successful learners through personalized instruction, meaningful relationships, and a supportive learning environment that empowers every student to reach their full potential.

Our Vision

Our vision is to inspire a lifelong love of learning by nurturing the natural curiosity within every student. Through a safe, engaging, and student-centered environment, students develop the academic, social, and leadership skills necessary to become confident learners, responsible citizens, and future leaders.

We believe student success is built through a strong partnership among students, families, educators, and the community. Together, we create opportunities that encourage growth, achievement, and a commitment to excellence.

Our Core Values

At Empower Academy, we are committed to:

- Parent choice and family engagement
- Student-centered learning experiences
- Academic excellence and continuous growth
- Building meaningful relationships
- Collaboration and teamwork
- Creativity, innovation, and critical thinking
- Respect, responsibility, and integrity
- Using the community as an extension of the classroom

Our Commitment

As Rutherford County's first locally authorized public charter school, Empower Academy proudly provides families with a high-quality educational choice. We are committed to creating an environment where every student is known, valued, challenged, and supported. Through personalized learning pathways and high expectations, we strive to ensure every student is prepared for future academic success and lifelong achievement.



The Empower Academy Dragon Promise

I will be respectful.

I will be responsible.

I will be ready to learn.

I will show kindness.

I will lead by example.

I will do my best every day.

Learning Philosophy

At Springs Public Schools Empower Academy, we believe every student has the ability to learn, grow, and succeed when provided with high expectations, meaningful support, and opportunities to explore their individual strengths.

Our educational approach is built upon the belief that learning should be engaging, challenging, and personalized. We recognize that students learn at different rates and through different methods. By providing differentiated instruction, flexible learning opportunities, and targeted support, we strive to meet the unique needs of every learner.

We believe students achieve their greatest success when they take an active role in their education. Through goal setting, reflection, collaboration, and problem-solving, students develop the confidence and independence necessary to become lifelong learners.

Family engagement is an essential component of student achievement. We value strong partnerships between home and school and encourage open communication, mutual respect, and shared responsibility for student success.

Our school community is committed to creating a safe, inclusive, and welcoming environment where every student feels valued, respected, and empowered to reach their full potential.

Principles of Personalized Learning

Student-Centered Learning

Students are active participants in their educational journey and are encouraged to take ownership of their learning.

Differentiated Instruction

Instruction is designed to address individual learning styles, strengths, and areas for growth.

Growth Mindset

Students are encouraged to embrace challenges, learn from mistakes, and continuously improve.

Collaboration and Communication

Students develop strong interpersonal skills through teamwork, discussion, and meaningful relationships.

Continuous Feedback

Regular assessment and feedback help students monitor progress, set goals, and celebrate achievement.

At Empower Academy, we are committed to developing confident learners, responsible citizens, and future leaders who are prepared for success in school and beyond.

Family Partnership & School Community

Partnership with Parents

At Springs Public Schools Empower Academy, we believe that parents and guardians are essential partners in student success. Strong communication, mutual respect, and active involvement create the foundation for academic achievement and positive character development.

Parents are encouraged to:

- Ensure regular attendance and punctuality.
- Monitor academic progress and school communications.
- Support school policies and expectations.
- Participate in conferences and school events.
- Maintain current contact and emergency information.
- Communicate concerns through appropriate school channels.

Together, families and staff create a supportive learning environment where students can thrive.

A Community That Feels Like Home

Empower Academy is more than a school—it is a community. We are committed to creating a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment where students, families, and staff feel valued, respected, and supported.

By fostering positive relationships, collaboration, and a culture of belonging, we help students develop the confidence and character needed for success both inside and outside the classroom.

Together, we empower students to learn, lead, and succeed.

Foreword to Students

Welcome to Springs Public Schools Empower Academy!

We are excited to have you as a member of our school community. At Empower Academy, we believe every student has the ability to learn, grow, and achieve success. Our goal is to provide a safe, supportive, and engaging learning environment where students are encouraged to explore their interests, develop their talents, and reach their full potential.

This handbook has been created to help students and families understand the policies, procedures, expectations, and opportunities available at Empower Academy. It serves as a guide for maintaining a positive school culture built on respect, responsibility, integrity, and academic excellence.

All students are expected to take an active role in their education by attending school regularly, being prepared to learn, treating others with kindness and respect, and following school expectations. By making positive choices each day, students contribute to a learning environment where everyone can be successful.

If you ever have questions about a policy, procedure, or expectation, please reach out to a teacher, administrator, or staff member. We are here to support you and help you succeed.

We encourage all students and families to carefully review this handbook and refer to it throughout the school year. Together, we can create a school community where every student is empowered to learn, lead, and succeed.

Have a fantastic school year!

Empower Academy Administration

Expectations for Students & Parents

Student Responsibilities

At Springs Public Schools Empower Academy, students are expected to contribute to a positive, safe, and productive learning environment. Students are responsible for:

- Attending school regularly and arriving on time.
- Coming to school prepared with required materials and completed assignments.
- Following all school rules, procedures, and staff directions.
- Demonstrating respect for themselves, others, and school property.
- Following the school dress code and technology policies.
- Refraining from bullying, harassment, intimidation, or disruptive behavior.
- Reporting unsafe situations, threats, bullying, or safety concerns to a staff member immediately.
- Using appropriate language and displaying respectful behavior at all times.
- Completing academic work honestly and avoiding cheating, plagiarism, or misuse of artificial intelligence.
- Cooperating with school personnel during investigations and disciplinary matters.
- Helping maintain a safe, respectful, and inclusive school environment.

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

Parents and guardians play a vital role in their child's education and are expected to:

- Ensure their child attends school regularly and arrives on time.
- Maintain current contact, emergency, and health information with the school.
- Review school communications and respond when necessary.
- Support school policies, procedures, and behavioral expectations.
- Encourage completion of homework and academic responsibilities.
- Attend conferences, meetings, and school events when possible.
- Communicate concerns respectfully through appropriate school channels.
- Treat students, families, staff, and visitors with courtesy and respect.
- Partner with the school to address academic, attendance, behavioral, or safety concerns.
- Promote a positive attitude toward learning and school involvement.

By working together, students, families, and staff help create a school culture that supports academic excellence, personal growth, and student success.

Name	Position	Email Address
Shane Wickwire	Executive Director/Principal	Shane.Wickwire@SpringsPSTN.org
Erin Bowman	Operations Director	Erin.Bowman@SpringsPSTN.org
Brenda Maingot	Assistant Director	Brenda.Maingot@SpringsPSTN.org
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Rosie Solis	Nutrition Director	Rosie.Solis@SpringsPSTN.org
Luis Solis	Facilities & Nutrition	Luis.Solis@SpringsPSTN.org
Debbie Parker	School Nurse	Debbie.Parker@SpringsPSTN.org
Emmanuel Tucker	School Resource Officer	Officer.Tucker@SpringsPSTN.org

Main Office Phone: 615-237-7170

For questions regarding attendance, enrollment, records, transportation, or general school information, please contact the Front Office.

Student Guidelines

At Springs Public Schools Empower Academy, students are expected to contribute to a safe, respectful, and productive learning environment. Students demonstrate good citizenship by showing respect for themselves, others, and our school community.

Respect Yourself

Students are expected to:

- Attend school regularly and arrive on time.
- Come prepared with required materials and assignments.
- Participate actively in learning opportunities.
- Complete academic work honestly and with integrity.
- Make positive choices that support personal growth and success.

Respect Others

Students are expected to:

- Treat all students, staff, and visitors with courtesy and respect.
- Use appropriate language and behavior at all times.
- Refrain from bullying, harassment, intimidation, or discrimination.
- Resolve conflicts appropriately and seek staff assistance when needed.
- Respect the right of others to learn and teachers to teach.

Respect Our School

Students are expected to:

- Follow classroom, cafeteria, playground, and school-wide expectations.
- Care for school property, technology, materials, and facilities.
- Remain in designated and supervised areas.
- Follow all safety procedures and staff directions.
- Help maintain a clean and orderly campus.

Electronic Devices & Prohibited Items

Cell phones and personal electronic devices must remain powered off and out of sight during the school day unless authorized by staff for instructional purposes. Unauthorized use may result in confiscation and disciplinary consequences.

Students may not possess weapons, dangerous objects, alcohol, tobacco products, vaping devices, controlled substances, or any item that threatens the safety or learning environment of the school.

By following these guidelines, students help create a school community where everyone is empowered to learn, lead, and succeed.

Academic Code of Conduct

At Springs Public Schools Empower Academy, academic integrity is a core value. Students are expected to complete their own work honestly and ethically while demonstrating responsibility, accountability, and respect for the learning process.

Academic Integrity Violations

Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Copying another student's work or allowing another student to copy your work.
- Using unauthorized assistance during quizzes, tests, or assignments.
- Plagiarizing information from books, articles, websites, or other sources without proper acknowledgment.
- Submitting work created by another person as your own.
- Reusing previously submitted work for another assignment without teacher approval.
- Collaborating on assignments intended to be completed independently.
- Falsifying, altering, or misrepresenting academic information.
- Using artificial intelligence (AI) tools to generate assignments, essays, projects, or responses without teacher authorization.
- Assisting another student in violating the Academic Code of Conduct.

Consequences for Academic Misconduct

When academic dishonesty is suspected, school staff may review student work, source materials, digital records, and other relevant information. Parents/guardians will be notified when violations occur.

First Offense

- Student must redo and resubmit the assignment or assessment as directed by the teacher.
- Parent/guardian notification by the teacher.
- Documentation maintained by the school.

Second Offense

- Student must redo and resubmit the assignment or assessment.
- Parent conference with the teacher and/or administrator.
- Documentation placed in the student's disciplinary record.

Repeated or Serious Offenses

- Parent conference with administration.
- Additional academic or disciplinary consequences may be assigned.
- Loss of privileges, behavioral interventions, or other corrective actions may be implemented.
- Documentation maintained in the student's school record.

Empower Academy is committed to helping students develop honesty, integrity, and accountability. Academic success is most meaningful when it is earned through a student's own effort, learning, and achievement.

School Hours, Attendance & Tardies

School Hours

Breakfast Begins: 6:45 AM

Student Drop-Off Begins: 6:45 AM

School Day Begins: 7:20 AM

Kindergarten Dismissal Begins: 2:00 PM

Student Dismissal Begins: 2:15 PM

Students arriving after 7:20 AM must be signed in by a parent or guardian through the front office and will be marked tardy.

Attendance Expectations

Regular attendance is critical to student success. Students are expected to attend school daily, arrive on time, and remain for the entire instructional day unless excused by a parent, guardian, or medical provider. Parents are responsible for notifying the school when a student is absent and providing appropriate documentation when requested.

Students who accumulate excessive absences, whether excused or unexcused, may be referred for attendance interventions in accordance with Tennessee law and school policy.

Tardies

Students arriving after 7:20 AM are considered tardy.

Excessive tardiness disrupts learning and may result in:

- Parent notification
- Attendance interventions
- Administrative conferences
- Additional attendance support plans

After-School Program

Empower Academy partners with the Smyrna Boys & Girls Club to provide after-school care until 6:30 PM. Current Fees:

- Registration Fee: \$30
- Weekly Fee: \$35
- School Break Care: \$90
- Drop-In Non-School Days: \$25

Program fees are subject to change by the Boys & Girls Club.

Attendance & Student Success

Regular attendance is one of the most important factors in student achievement. Students who attend school consistently are more likely to succeed academically, develop positive habits, and build strong relationships with teachers and peers.

Attendance Expectations

Students are expected to attend school every day, arrive on time, and remain in school for the entire instructional day unless excused by a parent, guardian, or medical provider. Parents are responsible for ensuring their child attends school regularly and communicating with the school regarding absences.

Absences

When a student is absent, parents should notify the school as soon as possible. Documentation may be requested to verify the reason for an absence.

Excessive absences, whether excused or unexcused, may negatively impact a student's academic progress and participation in school activities.

Chronic Absenteeism

A student is considered chronically absent when they miss 10% or more of the school year for any reason, including excused and unexcused absences. Chronic absenteeism may result in attendance interventions, parent conferences, and additional support measures designed to improve attendance.

Tardies

Students arriving after 7:20 AM are considered tardy and must be signed in through the front office by a parent or guardian. Frequent tardiness disrupts learning and may result in administrative intervention.

Early Dismissals

Students are expected to remain at school for the entire instructional day. Excessive early dismissals may be considered when reviewing attendance concerns and may impact a student's academic progress.

Family vacations and trips should be scheduled during school breaks whenever possible.

Make-Up Work

Students are responsible for completing missed assignments following an absence. Teachers will provide reasonable opportunities for students to make up work; however, it is the student's responsibility to obtain assignments and complete them within the timeframe established by the teacher.

Tennessee Attendance Requirements

Empower Academy follows all applicable Tennessee attendance laws and regulations. Students with excessive absences may be referred for attendance review and intervention as required by state law and school policy.

Drop-Off & Pick-Up Procedures

Morning Drop-Off

- Student drop-off begins at 6:45 AM.
- Students should arrive ready to exit the vehicle with all necessary belongings.
- Students must remain in vehicles until directed by staff.
- Parents needing additional time to assist students should park and escort students to the building.
- Students may only be dropped off in designated staff-supervised areas.
- Students may not arrive before 6:45 AM as supervision is not available.

Late arrivals after 7:20 AM must be checked in through the front office by a parent or guardian.

Afternoon Pick-Up

- Early dismissal requires a parent or authorized adult to sign the student out through the front office.
- A valid photo ID may be required at any time.
- Students will not be called from class after 2:00 PM except in emergency situations.
- Students will only be released to authorized individuals listed in the student information system.
- Any permanent changes to pick-up arrangements must be communicated to the front office.

Students should be picked up promptly at dismissal. Repeated late pick-ups may result in a parent conference and the development of an alternate dismissal plan. Students not picked up within 25 minutes of dismissal will be considered a late pick-up. Repeated late pick-ups may result in administrative conferences and the development of a mandatory alternate transportation plan.

Arrival & Departure Safety Procedures

The safety of our students, families, and staff is a top priority. All families are expected to follow campus procedures during arrival and dismissal.

Parking Lot Expectations

- Follow all staff directions at all times.
- Maintain a speed of 5 mph or less throughout campus.
- Remain attentive and avoid distractions while driving.
- Cell phone use while actively participating in the car line is prohibited.
- Smoking, vaping, or the use of tobacco products is prohibited on school property.

Respectful Conduct

The following behaviors are not permitted on school property:

- Yelling, profanity, or abusive language
- Threatening or intimidating behavior
- Harassment of staff, students, or families
- Excessive horn use or disruptive conduct

Failure to follow these expectations may result in administrative intervention and restrictions on campus access.

Student Safety

- Students must enter and exit through designated school entrances.
- Students may not leave campus during the school day without authorization.
- Students may not loiter before or after school.
- Students must remain under staff supervision while on campus.
- Parents should notify the front office of any transportation or dismissal changes prior to dismissal whenever possible.

Working together helps ensure a safe, efficient, and respectful arrival and dismissal process for everyone.

Student Medical & Medication Procedures

The health and safety of our students is a priority at Springs Public Schools Empower Academy. Parents and guardians are responsible for informing the school of any medical conditions, allergies, or health concerns that may affect their child's safety or educational experience.

Medication Requirements

Students requiring medication during the school day must have all required medical forms completed and approved before medication can be administered.

The following requirements apply:

- All medications must be delivered to the front office by a parent or guardian.
- Medications must be in the original pharmacy-labeled container or original manufacturer's packaging.
- A completed Medication Authorization Form signed by both the parent/guardian and healthcare provider must be on file.
- Students are not permitted to carry prescription medications, over-the-counter medications, homeopathic remedies, or supplements on campus.

Any medication found in a student's possession will be confiscated, and a parent or guardian will be required to retrieve it.

Medical Action Plans

Students with asthma, allergies, seizure disorders, diabetes, or other significant medical conditions must have a current physician-approved Action Plan on file each school year.

Action Plans provide staff with critical information needed to respond appropriately during a medical emergency and help ensure student safety while at school and during school-sponsored activities.

Medical Emergencies

In the event of a medical emergency, school personnel will follow the student's Action Plan, contact parents or guardians, and seek emergency medical assistance when necessary.

Parents are responsible for keeping all emergency contacts, medical information, and required medical documentation current throughout the school year.

Students are not permitted to self-carry medications on campus. All medications must be stored and administered through the school office in accordance with approved medical documentation.

School Breakfast, Lunch, & Outside Food

All students have the opportunity to receive both breakfast and lunch each school day. Students may arrive beginning at 6:45 AM to eat breakfast before classes begin.

If your student has special dietary needs, a Meal Accommodation Form approved by Nutrition Services must be on file. Please note that submitting an accommodation request does not guarantee that all accommodations can be provided.

Can my student bring their own lunch?

- Yes. Students may bring lunch from home; however, lunches may not require refrigeration, heating, or preparation by school staff. Refrigerators, microwaves, and ovens are not available for student use.

Can I drop my student's lunch off at the front office?

- Yes. If a student occasionally forgets their lunch, a parent or guardian may bring lunch to the front office. Families are encouraged to establish routines that ensure students arrive prepared each day.

What happens if my child forgets their lunch, it gets damaged, or lost, and I cannot bring another one?

- The school will ensure that the student receives a meal. No student will go without lunch during the school day.

Can food be delivered to my student from a restaurant or delivery service?

- No. Food deliveries from restaurants, delivery services, or third-party vendors are not permitted. Any food brought to school for a student must be delivered by a parent or guardian through the front office.

Where can I find the school menu?

- Monthly breakfast and lunch menus are available on the Empower Academy website.

Uniform Policy

All students are required to wear the approved school uniform each day unless otherwise announced for a designated spirit day, dress-down day, or special event. School uniforms promote school pride, reduce distractions, and help create a positive learning environment.

Approved Uniform Attire

Shirts: Plain polo shirts in white, black, or dark green. Empower Academy logo polos and approved polo dresses may also be worn. Shirts extending more than four inches below the belt line must be tucked in.

Bottoms: Khaki, dark navy (including jeans), gray, or black pants, shorts, skirts, skorts, or dresses. All clothing must fit appropriately and be free of rips, tears, holes, or fraying. Skirts, shorts, and dresses must be at least mid-thigh in length.

Leggings/Tights: White or black leggings or tights may be worn underneath approved skirts, shorts, or dresses. Leggings may not be worn as pants.

Outerwear: School-approved sweaters, sweatshirts, jackets, and hoodies may be worn inside the building. Logos on clothing other than official school apparel must be one inch or smaller.

Not Permitted

- Cargo pants
- Spandex shorts
- Mini skirts
- Clothing with holes, tears, or fraying
- Excessively tight or sagging clothing
- Hoop earrings, spike jewelry, or accessories that present a safety concern

Dress Code Violations

Students who arrive out of dress code may be required to contact a parent or guardian to bring appropriate clothing. Repeated dress code violations may result in disciplinary action.

Uniform items may be purchased from the Empower Academy Spirit Store or from retailers such as Walmart, Target, Old Navy, Kohl's, JCPenney, Amazon, and The Children's Place.

Final determination regarding appropriateness of student attire rests with school administration.

Technology, Personal Property & Deliveries

Cell Phones & Electronic Devices

Students may bring cell phones to school; however, all cell phones must remain powered off and stored in a backpack during the school day. Students may not use cell phones, smart watches, earbuds, headphones, tablets, gaming devices, or other personal electronic devices unless specifically authorized by school staff.

First offense may result in confiscation until the end of the school day. Repeated offenses may require parent pickup and may result in disciplinary consequences. Confiscated devices must be picked up by a parent or guardian. Empower Academy is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged electronic devices.

Parents should contact the school office at (615) 237-7170 if they need to communicate with their student during the school day.

Messages & Deliveries

Families should make transportation, lunch, clothing, and activity arrangements before students arrive at school.

To minimize classroom disruptions:

- Messages will only be delivered to students in emergency situations.
- Flowers, balloons, gifts, and similar deliveries will not be accepted.
- Students are responsible for bringing their own materials, assignments, and personal belongings to school.

Personal Property

Students are responsible for their personal belongings and school-issued materials. Empower Academy is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged personal property. Expensive or valuable items should remain at home.

Campus Visitors, Safety & Student Supervision

Student Supervision

Students must remain in supervised areas at all times. Loitering before school, after school, or in parking areas is prohibited.

Visitors & Volunteers

Parents and approved volunteers are welcome at Empower Academy. All visitors must:

- Sign in through the front office.
- Present identification when requested.
- Wear a visitor badge while on campus.
- Follow all school safety procedures.

Visitors may not enter classrooms without prior approval. Student guests, siblings, relatives, or friends may not attend classes without administrative approval.

Volunteer opportunities may require background screening in accordance with school policy.

Abusive language directed toward staff may result in a conference and restriction of campus access.

Animals on Campus

Animals, including family pets, are not permitted on school grounds unless specifically approved by school administration. Service animals will be accommodated in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

Tobacco, Vaping & Smoking

The use or possession of tobacco products, vaping devices, e-cigarettes, or similar products is prohibited on school property, during school events, and in vehicles participating in school car lines.

Parent Responsibilities & School Information

Parents on Campus

Parents should direct concerns regarding students, staff, or school matters to teachers or administrators. Parents may not approach, question, discipline, or confront students other than their own while on campus or at school events. Failure to follow this expectation may result in restricted volunteer or campus visitation privileges. **Springs Public Schools Empower Academy reserves the right to restrict campus access, volunteer privileges, or participation in school activities when a parent, guardian, or visitor engages in disruptive, threatening, intimidating, abusive, or inappropriate conduct.**

Change of Information

Parents are responsible for maintaining current contact information with the school. Changes in address, phone number, email address, emergency contacts, or custody arrangements should be reported immediately. Address changes require updated proof of residency documentation.

Emergencies

Students will only be released to authorized individuals listed in school records. A valid photo ID may be required before a student is released.

Parents are responsible for ensuring emergency contact information remains current throughout the school year.

Release of Photographs

Parents indicate photo permissions during enrollment. Students without photo permission may not appear in school photographs, videos, social media posts, publications, or marketing materials.

Lost and Found

Lost items may be claimed from the school's Lost and Found area. Families are encouraged to label personal belongings with the student's name. Unclaimed items may be donated periodically.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to complete their own work and demonstrate honesty in all academic activities. Violations of the Academic Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary and academic consequences.

Questions, Suggestions & Concerns

At Springs Public Schools Empower Academy, we value strong partnerships with our families and believe that open, respectful communication is essential to student success. We encourage parents and guardians to share questions, concerns, suggestions, and feedback with us throughout the school year.

To ensure concerns are addressed efficiently and appropriately, we ask families to follow the communication process below:

Step 1: Contact the Teacher

Questions or concerns regarding classroom instruction, assignments, grades, student behavior, or classroom procedures should first be directed to the student's teacher. Teachers are often able to resolve concerns quickly and effectively.

Step 2: Contact School Administration

If a concern cannot be resolved with the teacher, parents may request a meeting with school administration for additional support and guidance.

Communication Expectations

- Meetings should be scheduled in advance whenever possible.
- Parents should not interrupt classroom instruction or expect unscheduled conferences during arrival, dismissal, or instructional time.
- School staff will make every effort to respond to emails, phone calls, and messages within a reasonable timeframe.
- All communication between families, students, and staff should remain respectful and professional.

Our goal is to work collaboratively with families to support student achievement, maintain a positive school culture, and ensure every student has the opportunity to learn, grow, and succeed.

Together, we build a stronger school community.

Telephone Calls & Email Communication

Springs Public Schools Empower Academy values open communication between families, teachers, and administrators. We believe strong partnerships between home and school contribute to student success and encourage parents to communicate regularly with school staff.

Parents are encouraged to contact teachers through email, phone, Class Dojo, or by scheduling a conference. Please understand that teachers may not be immediately available during instructional time, planning periods, meetings, or other school responsibilities. Staff will make every effort to respond within two business days.

To minimize classroom disruptions, parents should not visit classrooms or request conferences without a scheduled appointment. Teachers are committed to supporting students and families while also maintaining instructional time and professional responsibilities.

Student Telephone Use

For the safety and security of all students:

- Students will not be called from class to receive telephone calls except in emergency situations.
- Students may not use personal cell phones during the school day.
- Students wishing to contact a parent or guardian must obtain permission from a staff member and use the office telephone.
- If a student becomes ill, is injured, or an emergency situation occurs, school personnel will contact the parent or guardian.

Parents who need to communicate important information to their child during the school day should contact the front office at **(615) 237-7170**.

We appreciate your partnership in helping us maintain a safe, respectful, and focused learning environment.

Discipline Policy

Philosophy of Student Discipline

At Empower Academy, we believe that students have unique needs and that positive behavioral expectations must be taught. Just as academic skills are taught on an individual basis, we believe students learn best in a safe, structured environment where expectations are clearly taught, consistently enforced, and supported through positive relationships and accountability.

Process and Procedures

Common Area Expectations – We have developed positive behavioral expectations for the building and school grounds. These expectations are in force at all times of the school day and for all grade levels. All adults are expected to monitor and model appropriate student behaviors in these areas. Expectations will be taught, reviewed, and reinforced by supervising adults. Failure to meet expectations will result in immediate redirection.

Student Discipline Matrix - A matrix has been developed to assist staff, students, and parents with consistent and logical consequences for student misbehaviors. The matrix outlines inappropriate school behaviors with a definition and potential consequences. This matrix is just a guide, however, and all incidents will receive individual attention, consideration, and appropriate response.

“Levels” - The Student Discipline Matrix identifies three different levels of student behavior. The intention is to maintain consistency and fairness in consequences, communication, and seeking of additional resources.

- **Level I** – Minor issues that are resolved by the supervising adult; behavior is seen as a learning opportunity and is expected to be corrected with no additional interventions; Office Referral is only needed if a student fails to correct behavior (mostly classroom-managed behavior).
- **Level II** – Common school misbehaviors needing redirection; seen as a learning opportunity to be handled between the student and supervising adult; in some cases, office referral and parent notification is required (mostly managed with the teacher).
- **Level III** - Severe misbehavior with potentially strong consequences including school suspensions and legal involvement; supervising adult is not expected to engage in any teaching, but rather immediately refer the student to the office and ensure the safety of students and staff. This is managed by the administration.

Office Referral Process

While many behavioral concerns can be addressed through classroom interventions and redirection, some behaviors require additional support from school administration. An office referral is used when student behavior significantly disrupts the learning environment, presents a safety concern, or continues despite previous interventions.

When a student is referred to the office, the goal is to identify the cause of the behavior, teach appropriate replacement behaviors, and restore a safe and productive learning environment.

Office Referral Procedures

The following process may be used when a student is referred to the office:

1. The student is referred to administration by the supervising staff member.
2. The student may complete a reflection form or written statement regarding the incident.
3. Administration investigates the incident and interviews involved students and staff.
4. Relevant information is reviewed and appropriate consequences or interventions are determined.
5. Parents or guardians may be contacted regarding the incident and disciplinary outcome.
6. Documentation is maintained in accordance with school procedures.
7. Follow-up meetings, behavioral supports, or interventions may be implemented when necessary.

The severity, frequency, and circumstances of the behavior will be considered when determining appropriate disciplinary action.

School administration reserves the right to modify disciplinary responses based on individual circumstances and student safety needs.

Bullying & Harassment Policy

Springs Public Schools Empower Academy is committed to providing a safe, respectful, and inclusive learning environment for all students. Bullying, harassment, intimidation, threats, hazing, retaliation, and cyberbullying are strictly prohibited and will not be tolerated.

Bullying is defined as repeated or severe behavior that intentionally causes physical harm, emotional distress, fear, humiliation, damage to property, or interferes with a student's educational opportunities or ability to participate in school activities.

Bullying may include:

- Physical aggression or intimidation
- Verbal harassment, teasing, or threats
- Social exclusion or spreading rumors
- Cyberbullying through social media, text messages, emails, websites, or electronic communication
- Harassment based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, or other protected characteristics

Reporting Bullying

Students who experience or witness bullying should immediately report the behavior to a teacher, counselor, administrator, or trusted staff member. All reports will be investigated promptly and confidentially to the greatest extent possible.

Consequences

Consequences for bullying or harassment may include:

- Student conferences and warnings
- Parent notification and conferences
- Loss of privileges
- Behavioral interventions
- Suspension
- Expulsion recommendations when permitted by law and school policy

Retaliation against any student who reports bullying or participates in an investigation is strictly prohibited and may result in additional disciplinary action. False reports of bullying made intentionally may also result in disciplinary consequences.

Cyberbullying that substantially disrupts the educational environment may result in school discipline, even when it occurs off campus.

Empower Academy is committed to working with students, families, and staff to maintain a school environment where every student feels safe, respected, and valued.

Student Discipline Matrix

Level I Behaviors – Classroom Managed

Level I behaviors are minor infractions that are typically addressed by the supervising staff member. These behaviors are considered learning opportunities and generally do not require administrative involvement unless they become repetitive or disruptive.

Examples of Level I behaviors include:

- Tardiness
- Dress code violations
- Classroom disruptions
- Failure to follow classroom procedures
- Hallway, cafeteria, or recess misconduct
- Unauthorized use of electronic devices
- Loitering
- Failure to serve detention
- Food, candy, gum, or drinks in unauthorized areas

Possible consequences may include:

- Verbal redirection
- Reteaching expectations
- Loss of privileges
- Parent communication
- Classroom consequence
- Teacher-assigned detention
- Behavior reflection activity

Repeated Level I behaviors may result in an office referral and elevation to a higher disciplinary level.

Level II Behaviors – Administrative Support

Level II behaviors are more serious or repeated misconduct that interferes with the learning environment and may require administrative involvement and parent notification.

Examples of Level II behaviors include:

- Repeated classroom disruptions
- Insubordination or refusal to follow directions
- Disrespect toward students or staff
- Damage to school or personal property
- Profanity or vulgar language
- Possession of inappropriate materials
- Being in unsupervised areas
- Repeated Level I violations

Possible consequences may include:

- Office referral
- Parent conference
- Behavior contract
- Restitution for damages
- Loss of privileges
- Detention
- In-school suspension
- Other corrective actions determined by administration

Consequences will be determined based on the severity, frequency, and circumstances of the behavior.

Level III Behaviors – Major Infractions

Level III behaviors are serious violations that threaten the safety, security, or well-being of students, staff, or the school environment. These behaviors require immediate administrative involvement and may result in suspension, expulsion recommendations, or law enforcement notification.

Examples of Level III behaviors include:

- Possession or use of alcohol, tobacco, vaping devices, or controlled substances
- Possession of weapons or dangerous objects
- Fighting or physical assault
- Threats or intimidation
- Bullying, harassment, or cyberbullying
- Theft
- Vandalism
- Cheating, forgery, or academic dishonesty
- Technology misuse or computer violations
- Any behavior that places others at risk

Possible consequences may include:

- Immediate office referral
- Parent conference
- Written disciplinary documentation
- In-school or out-of-school suspension
- Restitution for damages
- Behavior intervention plans
- Recommendation for expulsion
- Law enforcement involvement when required by law or deemed necessary for safety

Law Enforcement Notification

School administration may notify law enforcement when required by law or when student behavior presents a threat to the safety of students, staff, or the school community. This may include incidents involving weapons, drugs, serious threats, assaults, theft, vandalism, or other criminal activity.

Springs Public Schools Empower Academy reserves the right to address any behavior that disrupts the educational environment or threatens the safety and well-being of students and staff, regardless of whether the behavior is specifically listed in this handbook.

Digital Citizenship & Technology Use Agreement

Springs Public Schools Empower Academy believes technology enhances learning and prepares students for success in an increasingly digital world. Students are provided access to technology resources to support instruction, research, collaboration, creativity, and communication.

Students are expected to use all school technology resources responsibly, safely, ethically, and in accordance with school policies.

Student Responsibilities

Students are expected to:

- Use technology for educational purposes only.
- Protect usernames, passwords, and account information.
- Access only their own accounts and assigned resources.
- Demonstrate appropriate digital citizenship and online behavior.
- Report security concerns or inappropriate content to school staff immediately.
- Respect the privacy and rights of others when using technology.

Technology privileges may be suspended or revoked if misuse occurs.

Technology Misuse & Network Security

Students may not use school technology resources to:

- Access, create, download, store, or share inappropriate content.
- Harass, bully, threaten, intimidate, or discriminate against others.
- Violate copyright laws or intellectual property rights.
- Install software, applications, or extensions without authorization.
- Access restricted files, systems, or network resources.
- Attempt to bypass internet filters, monitoring systems, or security settings.
- Use proxy servers, VPNs, or similar services to hide internet activity.
- Introduce viruses, malware, or other harmful software.
- Conduct business activities or other non-educational activities.
- Engage in activities that violate school policy or local, state, or federal law.

School technology resources remain the property of Springs Public Schools Empower Academy and may be monitored at any time.

Students should have no expectation of privacy when using school-owned devices, networks, accounts, email systems, or internet services.

Google Workspace for Education & Technology Monitoring

Empower Academy utilizes Google Workspace for Education and other approved educational technology platforms to support teaching and learning.

Students may be provided access to tools including:

- Google Docs
- Google Slides
- Google Sheets
- Google Forms
- Google Drive
- Google Classroom
- Gmail (when applicable and approved)

These tools allow students and teachers to communicate, collaborate, complete assignments, and participate in instructional activities.

School administrators and staff may monitor student use of technology resources to ensure compliance with school policies and to protect the safety and security of students and staff.

Students who violate the Digital Citizenship & Technology Use Agreement may face disciplinary action, loss of technology privileges, restitution for damages, suspension, law enforcement referral when appropriate, or other consequences outlined in the Student Code of Conduct.

Parent & Student Handbook Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that we have received, reviewed, and understand the Springs Public Schools Empower Academy Parent & Student Handbook for the 2026-2027 school year.

We understand that it is our responsibility to become familiar with the policies, procedures, expectations, and requirements contained within this handbook.

We understand that the policies and procedures outlined in this handbook may be amended, revised, or updated by the school as necessary.

Handbook Section	Parent Initials	Student Initials
Expectations of Students & Parents	_____	_____
Student Guidelines	_____	_____
Academic Code of Conduct	_____	_____
Attendance, Arrival & Departure	_____	_____
Medical & Medication Procedures	_____	_____
Breakfast & Lunch Procedures	_____	_____
Uniform Policy	_____	_____
Additional Policies	_____	_____
Telephone Calls & Email Communication	_____	_____
Discipline Policy	_____	_____
Bullying & Harassment Policy	_____	_____
Digital Citizenship Agreement	_____	_____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Student Name: _____

Student Signature (Grades 2-7): _____ Date: _____

Failure to return this form does not exempt students or parents from compliance with handbook policies.