

**Hinckley-Finlayson**  
**Empower Learning Center Handbook**  
**2021-2022**

***Purpose***

The purpose of this handbook is to familiarize you with the mission and goals of Empower Learning Center (Empower). Other information includes learner programming, parent/guardian involvement, enrollment qualification, discipline policy, attendance policy, school rules, and copy of the learner contract and other services provided. Please keep this handbook as a reference.

***Mission***

The mission of Empower Learning Center is to use flexible and innovative methods to educate non-traditional high school learners in a supportive and rigorous environment that prepares them for life beyond high school. With the addition of restorative practices this mission is more fully realized by enhancing caring and accountable learner-staff relationships.

***Goals of Empower Learning Center***

- 1.To develop skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening.
- 2.To develop pride in work and a feeling of self-worth.
- 3.To develop good character and self-respect.
- 4.To learn how to examine and use information.
- 5.To learn how to be a good citizen.
- 6.To develop a desire for learning now and in the future.
- 7.To develop skills to be able to enter the world of work
- 8.To learn how to respect and get along with people who think, dress and act differently
- 9.To understand and practice democratic ideas and ideals.
- 10.To learn about and try to understand the changes that take place in the world.
- 11.To understand and practice the skills of family living,
- 12.To learn how to be a good manager of money, property, and resources.
- 13.To practice and understand the ideas of health and safety.

We want to assist learners in reaching their fullest academic and social potential, enabling them to become productive members of Empower Learning Center, as well as society in general.

We will work to achieve these goals by offering education in non-traditional forms, maintaining small class sizes, involving learners in volunteer work in the community, bringing in guest speakers, going on site visits, and bringing in the proper social service, mental health agency, or job service agency for those learners who qualify.

***Enrollment Qualification***

Empower is for learners ages 16 to 21 who have dropped out, been expelled, or are not experiencing success in their present school setting. Learners may attend the Empower under any one of the following provisions:

- 1.Performs substantially below the performance level for pupils of the same age in a locally determined achievement test
- 2.Is at least one year behind in satisfactorily completing coursework or obtaining credits for graduation
- 3.Is pregnant or is a parent
- 4.Has been assessed as chemically dependent
- 5.Has been excluded or expelled
- 6.Has been referred by a school district for enrollment in an eligible program
- 7.Is a victim of physical or sexual abuse
- 8.Has experienced mental health problems
- 9.Has experienced homelessness sometime within six months before requesting a transfer to an eligible program
- 10.Speaks English as a second language or has limited English proficiency
- 11.Has withdrawn from school or has been chronically truant

### ***Enrollment Procedure***

Each prospective learner, along with parents/guardians, must attend an intake meeting with an Empower advisor to ensure that we can meet the individual's needs. During this meeting the learner will complete an interest survey and interview questions will be asked of both the learner and parent/guardian. Each *learner* should come prepared to discuss their reason for enrollment in the program; as well as goals while attending the program, and goals after succeeding in attaining a high school diploma.

During the intake meeting a Continual Learning and Career Plan (CLCP) will be developed for each learner attending Empower. The CLCP will be written during the interview with input from the learner, parent/guardians, advisor, and others to address the specific needs of each individual learner.

Learners may also take a comprehensive and reliable academic assessment on Reading, Language Arts and Math to effectively assess skills and knowledge. Learners will be provided diagnostic assessments of specific areas for improvement in tested subject areas. These assessments will also be used to help determine potential post secondary education opportunities.

At the end of the intake meeting, If learner and parent/guardian feel Empower will be a good educational environment and they agree to Empower policies, the learner, parent/guardian, and advisor will sign the Empower Learning Center Learner/parent/guardian/Advisor Contract for the current school year.

An intake meeting is required to begin studies at Empower and again at the start of each academic year for returning learners.

### ***Parent/Guardian/guardian Involvement***

Parents/guardians are considered to be an important component to a learner's success at Empower Learning Center. Parents/guardians will be involved in all decisions concerning their

learner while he/she attends Empower. Parents/Guardians will be encouraged to review all project proposals for their learner. Parents/guardians are encouraged to keep in contact with the school on a daily basis if necessary. Parents/guardians are invited to visit our school at any time. Parents/Guardians are also encouraged to work with Empower staff to complete their HS diploma or High School Equivalence requirements.

We encourage parents/guardians to take an active interest in their learner's education, and we want to remind learners that their education is their responsibility. Parent/Guardians will be updated and informed of learner progress through bi-weekly progress reports, parent/guardian/teacher advisor conferences and phone calls, mail, text, or emails when needed.

## ***ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT***

Empower is a place offering near limitless learning opportunities. Learners will accomplish this by setting and tracking quarterly academic and personal goals for him/herself. The learner and advisor will monitor goals throughout each quarter and are evaluated by the learner and advisor at the end of each quarter. Learners are strongly encouraged to strive toward earning six academic credits per year.

Credits earned at Empower are based on MN State Academic Standards and Hinckley-Finlayson Graduation Standards. In order to graduate from Empower, learners are required to study the same academics required by any other public school in Minnesota. However, we adjusted many standards for learners to better understand the content in order to design projects in each of the subject areas. Learners may review either the basic checklist of all standards titles, or the detailed list of specific standards.

## ***General Credit Guidelines***

Each credit consists of learning targets (Minnesota High School Standards). In general, each credit will have 9-15 learning targets to meet. At Empower there are no letter grades given. As soon as mastery of learning targets and credits in all subject areas is demonstrated, and other District requirements are met, a learner will be issued a high school diploma. The two primary ways learners earn credit at Empower are:

1. Project Based Learning: PBL is a learner/advisor driven way to earn credit and demonstrate learning targets met. Highly structured meetings take place where learners design projects, with guidance from an assigned advisor, to meet specific learning targets. Every project will be submitted for approval before work can begin on the project. Learners will complete a proposal, which will need to be reviewed/approved by at least one advisor and, if possible, a parent/guardian before starting the project. The great thing about this process is it gives the learner a tremendous amount of input into learning about things that interest them, while at the same time meeting state required guidelines for graduation.

**One credit is earned for approximately every 130 hours of completed project work.**

2. Online Course: (Odysseyware, Edgenuity, Alison, etc..) Blended learning is an educational experience that combines PBL learning with supplemental online learning. This allows learners to learn subjects at the ideal pace, while giving educators the opportunity for more individualized instruction. Each course starts with a guiding question and a real world project to complete. The guiding questions and the end product (demonstration of knowledge) will determine the number of learning targets met. Blending improves learner engagement and independent learning habits. All Odysseyware core, elective, and CTE (Careers and Technical Education) courses integrate easily into the blended learning environment. Learners and educators can access Odysseyware anytime, anywhere for personal flexibility. **Credits earned vary by online course.**

Some projects have a maximum yearly credit for completed projects.

- Driver's Education: permit 0.25 credits
- EMC (Early-Middle College):1 Empower credit per 4 college semester credits
- Approved Community Service Activities: .25 credits for 56 hrs
- Work Study is program: .25 credits for 56 hrs (maximum of 3 credits for work study)

## ***POLICY OF ACADEMIC PROGRESSION***

Learners at Empower are required to progress through the school's curriculum in the following manner:

1. Learners are encouraged to complete six (6) project credits per year to advance to the next grade level. One project credit is earned for every 130 hours of completed project work.
2. It is recommended that the learner work to develop their time management skills by completing a weekly or daily planner.
3. It is recommended that learners complete a minimum of 8 hours of work per week in the math and reading programs. Learners not making math progress may be advised to complete math work on Fridays or to work with a parent/guardian at home.
4. Learners will be required to complete time logs with a description of the work and time completed unless they have entered into a contract project.
5. Projects credits are based on product completion, and have defined tasks, a definite product, deadlines that are met with evidence of progress, a rubric and/or quality of work completed.
6. To get credit for any project/activity/class, it must be proposed and signed by the advisor, and if possible, the project proposal team, parent/guardian, and/or the responsible adult. Credit will be in jeopardy if not proposed prior to the activity/project/class.
7. It is recommended that summer projects/ prior year projects be validated by the end of 1<sup>st</sup> quarter or no credit may be issued.

## ***Credit and Grade Requirements***

Bi-weekly progress reports mailed to parents/guardians for each learner. Parents/guardians and learners are encouraged to participate in school parent/guardian-teacher conferences. Parents/Guardians will be notified through multiple means of the conference schedules. A report on credits acquired will be issued at the end of each quarter. Grades for Empower earned credits will be signified by a "P" for passing. All coursework must be completed at a

minimum of a D-, or 60%, accuracy. If letter grades are requested this is the marking scale used:

### ***Our Marking System***

A 95	C 75
A- 90	C- 70
B+ 89	D+ 69
B 85	D 65
B- 80	D- 60
C+ 79	F 59 or below

Learners must earn at least 60% to earn a passing grade.

### ***Adequate Progress***

At Empower, we recognize that every learner has an individual learning style and progression. To ensure that every learner has the opportunity to reach their potential the Empower staff will coordinate with the learner and when appropriate parent/guardian to establish learning milestones. If these milestones can not be met, it may require the learner's team to discuss other learning options outside Empower that would better serve the learner's needs.

At learner intake and every quarter the learner's team will establish a set of academic and personal goals for that period. These goals will be based on the learner's needs and abilities at that time however, in general, the goal should be to earn at least six credits in an academic year. If the learner is not on track to earn the planned credits, that person will be placed on academic probation.

Academic probation means that the following procedures will be set in motion until adequate progress is being made:

1. There will be a daily meeting between learner and advisor to show evidence of progress and to set goals and criteria for success.
2. If adequate progress is not made in two more weeks, weekly meetings with parents/guardians will be set up.
3. If adequate progress is still not made, the learner, parent/guardian and staff will meet to develop recommendations to improve learner progress. The staff may recommend the learner find another educational setting.

\*If at any point in the academic assistance process the academic team and advisor determine the learner is meeting adequate academic progress over a sustained period of time, the learner may be taken off academic probation.

### ***Extracurricular Activities***

Learners are eligible to participate in extracurricular activities if they have completed one (1) credits per quarter (including math and reading) as reviewed by the Empower staff. Learners will need 1 completed credit 1st quarter, 2.0 completed credits 2nd quarter, 3.0 completed credits 3rd quarter, and 4.0 completed credits 4th quarter. Learners may be restricted from activities if they are not making academic progress.

## ***Early Middle College/POST SECONDARY OPTIONS (PSEO), INTERNSHIP OR SERVICE LEARNING:***

To be eligible you must:

1. Attain junior or senior status.
2. Complete all necessary college forms.
3. Maintain full time enrollment at Empower, meeting with your advisor.
4. Completion of CLP Career section
5. Completion of Career Cluster Assessment
6. Meet PTCC Accuplacer benchmarks

HF Empower Early Middle College/PSEO learners will take a short College Readiness Seminar based on the MNADE publication "College Success: Understanding the Difference Between High School and College." This seminar will highlight the difference between high school and college in the areas of learner responsibility, academic environment, and provide a framework for loop successful college behaviors.

### **WORK EXPERIENCE:**

Learners will be eligible for the work program and successfully demonstrate the ability to complete academic progress. While on the work program they will complete all necessary forms and abide by all policies and procedures as set forth in the Work Experience Program. Work should be viewed as a stepping-stone towards a lifelong career.

## ***ALTERNATIVE OPTION FOR A HINCKLEY-FINLAYSON HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA***

### **Option Summary**

The HF Empower Learning Center's alternative option for a high school diploma is a standard competency-based program. This diploma is issued by the Hinckley-Finlayson School District to Empower learners that complete all requirements for this option.

### **Aligned to Minnesota Educational Standards**

Competencies for the Empower alternative option for a high school diploma are based on Minnesota's current K-12 graduation standards and also embed:

- College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS)
- Academic, Career and Employability Skills (ACES) Transitions Integration Framework and
- Digital Literacy Standards

### **Competency Domains**

Learners participating in this option must satisfactorily complete each of five competency domains.

1. Language Arts: Reading/Writing/Language/Speaking and Listening
2. Mathematics: Algebra/Geometry/Meaning and Data/Statistics and Probability
3. Science: Nature of Science and Engineering/Life Science/Physical Science/Earth and Space Science
4. Social Studies: Civics/History/Geography/Economics
5. Employability and Career Awareness: Resume/Self-Management/Future Pathway/Navigating Systems/Digital Literacy

### **Learners Demonstrate Skills**

HF Empower alternative diploma learners may successfully complete each competency through one of the following ways, as approved by the HFHS office:

1. Prior Experience-Based Competency Verification (K-12 or other approved experiences)
2. Test-Verified Knowledge (approved standardized assessment for high schools, secondary credentials, or postsecondary entrance exams)
3. Empower Course Work (classes that combine academic, college and career content, like special diploma classes, Accuplacer classes, college readiness classes, subject-specific classes, etc.)
4. Applied and Experiential Learning (through approved project based learning experiences)

### **Learner Eligibility Requirements**

In order to qualify for this alternative option to an HF diploma the learner must be eligible and enrolled in Empower.

1. They must be 18 years old or older and at least one year behind in satisfactorily completing coursework or obtaining credits for graduation
2. They must receive a valid score at or above a 6th grade reading level on a norms assessment such as MAP, CASAS, or TABE

### **Success Through Advising, Instruction, and Evaluation**

Advising

1. Identify learner goals
2. Assess learner skills and experience to determine what competencies that may already be complete for the transcript based on prior learning competency verification
3. Identify potential career pathway(s) and needs using career and postsecondary preparation assessments
4. Develop an individualized learning plan based on the learner' identified goals and skills.

## **Instruction and Evaluation**

1. Implement individualized learning plan based on instruction and preparation on the competency domains.
2. Post-test evaluation of learners using approved assessments
3. Track progress towards diploma and goals
4. Update and adapt individualized learning plan
5. Provide additional support services

## **Graduating Advising Sessions**

1. Evaluate learners' program work to ensure completion of necessary competencies
2. Create transitions plan to learners' future goals

## ***Program Services and Activities***

### **Counseling Services**

A learner's emotional health is critical to their success in school. All learners enrolled have the opportunity to meet with school counselors with no out of pocket expense.

### **Awards Ceremony and Recognition**

Empower conducts an annual ceremony as a celebration of a major accomplishment. Seniors will need to keep in touch with their home school districts regarding senior pictures in yearbooks and procedures to walk through their high school commencement.

### ***Discipline Policy***

Adolescence is a crucial time in a person's life when behavior habits are formed that often last a lifetime. We want to provide an environment that is conducive to learning. Rules and consequences are discussed in the interview and posted so learners know what is expected of them. The rules are simple and kept to a minimum so they are easy to follow.

Learners will be recognized and rewarded for good behavior, and every effort will be made to keep learners in school.

Empower has a three-strike rule with progressive consequences if a learner violates terms of the Learner Contract signed upon enrollment:

1. The first violation of the Learner Contract will result in the learner being removed from Empower until a re-entry meeting can be scheduled with the parent/guardian and Empower staff to review the action/behavior and develop solutions to prevent the behavior from recurring. If the violation is drug, alcohol, weapons, or tobacco related learners will be required to attend the New Direction program. Once this meeting has taken place, the learner is immediately reinstated into the Empower classroom.

2. If there is a second violation of the Learner Contract, the learner will be removed from Empower until another re-entry meeting can be scheduled with the parent/guardian and Empower staff to review the action/behavior and develop solutions to prevent the behavior from recurring. As a result of a second violation, the learner will not be allowed to re-enter Empower classroom until the start of the next academic semester.

\*To gain reentry during the existing academic semester, learners may voluntarily accept a 4 day placement at New Direction. After successful completion of the New Direction program learners will be allowed to reenter Empower. This option will only be offered one time.

3. If there is a third violation of the Learner Contract, the learner will no longer be allowed to participate in the Empower program for the remainder of the academic school year.

To support the learner in improving their behavior, if needed, Empower may use a two-step behavior contract consequence.

Any infraction of policies, procedures and/or CLCP is grounds to implement the contract system. The contract level depends on the severity of the infraction. Not fulfilling the contract objectives could lead to dismissal from the program.

If a learner's behavior becomes disruptive to the class and they refuse to control themselves, they will be asked to leave or be removed. In order to return to class, the learner and parent(s) or guardian must meet with the coordinator so the situation can be discussed and resolved. There will be no need for a learner attending Empower Learning Center to disrupt classes or break rules as a means of venting his/her frustrations. Learners will have access to the coordinator and teacher every day to discuss problems they may have. Other professionals will be brought in to help learners with specific problems. The counseling department offers weekly counseling sessions that address a wide variety of issues.

In order to succeed at Empower Learning Center, learners must take responsibility for their education and behavior, they must take advantage of the services offered, they must recognize that other learners have a right to a calm, supportive environment, and finally, they must recognize that the teachers have a right to teach. If all learners follow this path to success, there will be few discipline problems at our school.

## ***Empower Learning Center Rules***

### **1. Be On Time**

Being on time expresses a positive attitude. Developing a positive attitude is essential for success. Learner success is the primary goal of our school.

### **2. Be Respectful Toward Others**

You have to give respect to get respect. Disrespect involves: vulgar language, touching or grabbing others without permission, teasing or put-downs, offensive clothing, making threats, taking or destroying personal or school property, etc.

### **3. Follow the Staff's Directions**

You are here to succeed, to get your high school diploma. The advisors are here to help you accomplish this goal. Listen to them. If you have a problem with a teacher, discuss it with them in a calm, reasonable manner. If you cannot solve the problem together, see the coordinator, High School Principal, Ms. Hartl, or Ms. Korf.

#### **4. Do Not Be Disruptive**

If you cannot or will not follow the rules, you will be asked to leave until you can. The basic assumption of this school is that you want to succeed. If you are not ready to work with the teachers, staff, and other learners to accomplish success, then you will have to leave and come back when you can work with us. There is no system built in this school to deal with chronic discipline problems once the contract system has been exhausted.

### ***Attendance Policy***

#### **In-Person Requirement**

The attendance policy for Empower Learning Center is different from the policy of the traditional high school. In order to be successful, learners must attend school on a regular basis. The attendance policy is:

1. Attend school every day, Monday – Thursday
  - a. Fridays are alternative study days.
  - b. Learners also have the opportunity to use night school Tuesday and Thursday from 3:30 – 5:30pm to make up hours/days.
2. The scheduling of Friday as an alternative study day for Empower learners is threefold. First, most Empower learners use Fridays as a work day at their place of employment. This allows learners to maintain some degree of economic solvency. The Friday schedule also allows learners to earn high school elective credits for work study hours. This is done in coordination through cooperation of the Empower coordinator and the learner's employer. Lastly, if a learner is not employed, they are offered the opportunity to attend more school hours than the mainstream high school learner by taking advantage of Fridays and after school classes on Tuesday and Thursday. Friday's schedule will be used to finish work or make up missed hours or absences from Monday – Thursday.
3. Learners will have two weeks to make up missed hours/absences, or they will be added to the permanent attendance record and cannot be made up.
4. A Parent/guardian must call if their learner will be absent or tardy.
5. If registered in course at HFHS, attend and participate in all of your classes and complete all assigned work.
  - a. Refusal to attend or participate in required HFHS classes could be considered a contract violation and learners are subject to the Empower discipline policy.
  - b. While attending HFHS classes, learners are required to comply with all HFHS student policies. Failure to comply may result in learners being subject to HFHS discipline policies.
6. All tardy and absence issues will be handled as part of the discipline contract policy. The discipline contract policy will be based on an Empower learner's semester attendance record. At the beginning of each semester attendance will be reset.
  - a. Four unexcused tardies will constitute one unexcused absence.
  - b. Eight unexcused absences will constitute an Empower contract violation (Strike).
  - c. Tardy is defined as arriving at school after 8:20am

7. Unexcused early-outs will be considered a full unexcused absence for the entire day. Learners will not be granted credit for the hours they attended school earlier that day if they leave early unexcused.

a. If a learner is asked to leave early for a behavior violation, they will not be granted attendance for that day.

8. Learners can earn a personal leave day for the completion of one full credit of work.

a. If the learner has more than three unexcused absences, this personal day will be used to make up one unexcused absence.)

### **Distance Learning Requirement**

All learners are expected to log in to each of their classes daily. The expectation is that a learner works for 5 hours or earns 0.04 credits each day. It is recommended parents monitor their learner's attendance by using their "Parent Log-in" through Edgenuity.

Example: A learner is enrolled in 6 courses. They should be working on each course for 50 minutes or 0.4 credits overall every single day. They will be "attending" school for 5 hours a day and/or 20 hours a week. Twenty hours can be equated to 0.16 credits of work. Attendance will be tracked weekly using Edgenuity student activity reports.

Learners who do not meet these requirements and do not have an excused absence will not be given a full week of attendance. Learners who have eight (8) absences will receive one (1) behavior strike. Learners can make up for attendance by earning credits.

If a learner has a law binding IEP, the learner will have special education services and/or social work services delivered through an online format; Learners are required to "attend/participate" in all scheduled services during their stated days and times.

### **Absences fall into one of two categories:**

1. **Excused Absences/Tardy:** Typically for personal illness, emergencies, medical or dental appointments, court appearances, special family obligations, religious observance or situations where there is an agreement between parent/guardian, school and learner as to the purpose and validity of the absence. A note signed by a parent/guardian is required for an absence or tardy to be excused.

2. **Unexcused Absences/Tardy:** An absence which has not been approved by parent/guardian and the school, skipping class(es) during the school day, or leaving school at any time for any reason during the school day without securing permission.

If you are going to miss school, you are required to call and let us know you won't be here. All health appointments need to be confirmed with a medical note. Each day that you miss without calling us or having a parent/guardian call us, we will call your home to see where you are. If you skip consistently, or are not in compliance with the attendance policy, you will be asked to leave school until you are ready to make a stronger commitment to your education. It hurts you to miss school for any reason, whether it is because you are absent or asked to leave. You can finish credits here faster than the regular school, but you need to be in attendance to do so.

### **Schedules**

The following is a general idea of how Empower day is broken down by activities. Each day may vary depending on needs at that time.

<b>Time</b>	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>		<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>
8:20-9:20	Period 1	Period 1		Period 1	Hybrid 1
9:21-10:20	Period 2	Period 2		Period 2	Hybrid 2
10:20-11:30	Period 3	Period 3		Period 3	Hybrid 3
11:30-12:00	Lunch	Lunch		Lunch	Lunch
12:00-1:00	Period 4	Period 4		Period 4	Hybrid 4
1:00-2:00	Period 5	Period 5		Period 5	Hybrid 5
2:00-3:00	Period 6	Period 6		Period 6	Hybrid 6
3:15-4:15		Extended Day Period 1		Extended Day Period 1	
4:15-5:15		Extended Day Period 2		Extended Day Period 2	
		<b>Time</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>		
		8:20-9:15	Period 1		
		9:15-10:10	Period 2		
		10:10-11:05	Period 3		
		11:05-12:00	Period 4		
		12:00-12:30	Lunch		
		12:30-1:15	Period 5		
		1:15-2:00	Period 6		

### ***Lunch Schedule***

Empower learners will eat lunch in between the two high school lunch schedules. Empower is a closed campus and learners are not allowed to leave the grounds. We do have an Ala-Carte lunch program, which a learner must have cash for. There is no charging for school lunch or Ala-Carte.

### ***Snow Days***

Empower Learning Center follows late start/cancellations of the Hinckley-Finlayson School District. Empower will make every effort to transition to a “Digital/Offsite Learning Day” to avoid cancellation of school. These schedule changes are announced via the District's Remind notices, website, and Facebook page as well as local radio and television stations.

## ***Work Release Program***

The Work Release Program has been established to provide Empower learners the opportunity for employment during school hours so long as it does not adversely affect academic goals.

Procedure:

1. Empower learners would express an interest in working during school hours.
2. Parent/Guardian approval of entering the school/work program and an understanding of the Empower learner responsibilities.
3. Empower learner would demonstrate their ability to meet academic requirements prior to and during school/work program:
  - a. Over a two-week progress-reporting period, learners will exceed their individual program requirements by at least 10%.
  - b. Once academic progress has been demonstrated, the learner, parent/guardian, Empower Coordinator and employer will sign a Work Release Contract of expectations.
  - c. During the Work Release program learners will meet their individual program requirements for every progress-reporting period. If a learner fails to meet bi-weekly reporting requirements they will be placed on a two-week probation period. During this probation period, learners must make up the insufficient progress and be back on track with their individual program progress timeline.
4. Three (3) unexcused absences OR tardies will be cause for removal from the Work Release program.
5. The Work Release program will allow learners to leave school for no more than two hours (1:00pm) every school day.
6. Empower Coordinator will communicate with the Empower learner, parent/guardian, and employer on the learner's academic progress and the Empower learners work performance. Unsatisfactory work performance will also be grounds for removal from the Work Release program. This includes three unexcused absences or tardies at the place of employment; three unexcused absences or tardies at school; or inability to maintain academic work schedule during a progress reporting period.

## ***Smoking/Vaping Policy***

The staff at Empower Learning Center recognizes that smoking is an addictive behavior and that once a person has developed the habit it is a difficult one to break. While we sympathize with the smoker/vaper, we are directed to follow state law and school district policy regarding smoking by learners and staff.

Our smoking policy follows state law and school district guidelines and is as follows:

1. No one is allowed to smoke/vape anywhere in Hinckley-Finlayson High School or Empower. This includes but is not limited to; rooms, hallways, bathrooms, locker room, and entry doors.
2. No one is allowed to smoke/vape on I.S.D. #2165 property. This includes entryways, sidewalks, parking lots, the sides of buildings, or the streets (this looks bad to people driving by and gives our school a bad reputation to the public.)
3. Possession of tobacco products by learners on school property is prohibited. Learners in violation of this policy will not receive credit for being in school that day and will be turned over to the local police and, under city ordinance and state law, be subject to a fine.

4. No warnings, no second chances, no exceptions. The learner will be subject to our discipline policy.

### ***Drug/Alcohol Policy***

Learners are not permitted to use or possess any illegal substance at any time in the school building or on the school grounds. This applies to all school sponsored activities as well as the regular school day. Violation of this rule will result in suspension, discipline procedure or dismissal from the Empower Learning Center.

Items containing tobacco, alcohol, or illegal substances are subject to confiscation by school authorities and will be made available to the learner's parents/guardian or to the legal authority whichever circumstances suggest is proper.

### ***Age of Majority***

Learners who reach the age of majority (18) must acknowledge that all policies under which the school operates will be equally applied to all learners regardless of age. Notwithstanding the provisions of any law to the contrary, the conduct of all learners under 21 years of age attending public secondary school shall be governed by a single set of reasonable rules and regulations promulgated by the local Board of Education. (M.S.A. 120.06)

### ***Administrative Discretion***

This Handbook does not cover all situations. Therefore, the administration reserves the right to sanction learners for violating school rules and expectations not specifically covered in this publication. Sanctions may include but are not limited to strikes, out of school suspension, exclusion, expulsion, community/school service, parent/guardian sanctions, and loss of privileges. The HFHS Principal or Empower Coordinator, may impose or recommend suspension, expulsion, or any other discipline as appropriate on a case by case basis. This handbook may be changed or amended during the school year. In the event changes are made after publication of this document the new policy shall be followed. If you have any questions about a provision, contact the Empower Coordinator.

### ***Other Services***

Our basic mission is to provide the learner with the classes he/she needs to obtain their high school diploma. In addition to the regular classes offered, Empower will offer other services, such as community volunteer service and extra credit opportunities, to assist the learners with their social and vocational needs.

Vocational Experience – Efforts will be made to provide learners with a vocational experience through post-secondary school visits and/or industry visits...In addition to the vocational experience, emphasis will center on learning proper social and work behavior while on the job.

Guest Speakers/ Site Visits – Teachers will schedule speakers to come into classes and do presentations on a variety of topics and aid in the learning process. Site visits will be scheduled if the visit will also add to the learning process.

School Activities – Throughout the school year social activities will be planned for the learners.

## **Staff Goals**

- 1.Improve academic achievement among at-risk and truant learners
- 2.Reduce and prevent truancy
- 3.Expose learners to educational and social opportunities that they might not otherwise experience
- 4.Allow learners to successfully complete state requirements and earn a high school diploma.
- 5.Reduce alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use.
- 6.Reduce the level of violence among learners.

We are confident you will succeed here if you truly desire to do so. We will do all we can to keep our program interesting and motivating for you. You, in turn, must realize that your education is your responsibility and you have to be prepared to work hard to get it. Feel free to contact Empower at (320) 384-6132 or email [bmasterson@isd2165.org](mailto:bmasterson@isd2165.org) or [bjensen@isd2165.org](mailto:bjensen@isd2165.org) if you have questions or concerns.

## **Electronic Devices**

Learners may use their electronic devices during the school day. For safety reasons, learners will not make or receive phone calls or wear any type of headphones while walking in the hallways. Incoming or outgoing calls are encouraged during breaks and lunch. On Fridays, electronic devices may be used for non-calling purposes if they do not interfere with individual school work or other learners.

If a learner does not have a personal electronic device they listen to streaming music from the computer with appropriate headsets. Acceptable sources of music include I-Heart Radio, iTunes Radio, Soma FM, but this does not include video music. Watching music videos is not acceptable and could result in loss of computer privileges.

If the above expectations are not met, the learner will be given a warning. If unacceptable activity continues, learners will be asked to turn off their electronic devices. If failure to comply continues, the staff will take the electronic devices for the remainder of the day. Failure to comply with staff requests for the electronic devices will be considered a contract violation and the learner will be removed from school and a re-entry meeting will be required with the parent/guardian, learner and staff before the learner may attend Empower classes.

A learner may never take pictures, videos, or recordings without permission from the Empower or High School Office staff. Empower is not responsible for lost or damaged personal electronic devices.

## ***Driving and Parking***

Learners are allowed to park in the public lot adjacent to the Empower building in spots on the far southern side of the lot.

## ***Visitors and Guests***

Learners who are considering attending and wish to visit Empower should make arrangements. All such visitations must be pre-arranged two days in advance with the Empower staff. Enrolled learners are not allowed to bring guests to school.

## ***Food and Beverages***

Beverages and food are allowed in the classroom area as long as it does not interfere with the learning environment or causes a nuisance.

## ***Vandalism***

Learners who are apprehended and judged guilty of vandalizing school or personal property will be required to make monetary restitution in full. Local authorities will be contacted if deemed necessary by the High School Principal. This also applies to damage caused by horseplay, play fighting, etc. Disciplinary action may or may not include suspension based upon the severity of the incident.

## ***Buses***

### ***Bus/Transportation***

All school bus riders must comply with the following rules on all district vehicles and at bus stops or they will be subject to school disciplinary measures which can include school consequences, out of school suspension, and suspension of bus riding privileges. When a learner is suspended from the bus, parents/guardians will be responsible for transportation of the learner. All bus rides are videotaped for discipline and safety purposes.

**A. Rules for Ridership- Use/ridership of the school bus (or any district transportation) is a privilege and can be revoked at the principal's discretion.**

- 1 All bus rules apply to the entire bus ride and bus stops.
- 2 Follow all directions from the driver.
- 3 Stay in assigned seats and keep all parts of your body in the seat.
- 4 No physical or verbal abuse, or obscene gestures- keep hands and feet to yourself.
- 5 The Hinckley-Finlayson Schools Racial, Religious, Sexual Harassment, and Discipline policies are in force at all times.
- 6 Do not litter, write on, or damage the bus in any way.
- 7 No profanity, loud noises, or distractions are allowed.
- 8 Cell phones/electronic device use will be allowed except for making phone calls, recording or taking pictures. Drivers, sponsors, and/or coaches may allow learner to arrange rides or use phones in emergency situations and/or to contact parent/guardians.
- 9 Each learner is allowed 2 bus stops.

10 Parents/Guardians are strongly encouraged to call the transportation director or high school office when the learner is not riding.

## **B. Safety and Conduct**

- 1 Learners will not cross the road until the driver so indicates.
- 2 When loading and unloading on routes, cross the road ten feet in front of the bus.
- 3 When getting off the bus, get away from the unloading zones as quickly as possible.
- 4 Keep bus aisles clear.
- 5 Learners should be at designated pick-up posts on time.
- 6 Parents/Guardians are liable for damages to the bus done by their learners.
- 7 Once learners have arrived on school grounds, learners are not allowed to leave grounds without permission of district personnel. Transportation may be denied to learners who leave school grounds without permission.

**C. Consequences-** Riding district transportation is a privilege. Learners who do not conduct themselves appropriately and follow directions will not be allowed to use district transportation. Consequences are cumulative for the school year (cumulative for 60 days for elementary learners).

- 1 Step 1- Driver will verbally warn learners and follow up with the parent/guardian. Driver may visit with the parent/guardian in person, by email, phone, or note signed by driver and parent/guardians.
- 2 Step 2- Written bus report to principal. School will assign consequences (such as lunch detentions, after school detention, behavior essay). Learner will have a follow up conference with school representative (principal, counselor, or case manager) and transportation representative to address behavior.
- 3 Step 3- Written bus report to principal. Learner will be suspended from all buses/district transportation for 3-5 days. parent/guardian must meet with school representative (principal, counselor, or case manager) and transportation representative to address behavior.
- 4 Step 4- Written bus report to principal. Learner will be suspended from all buses/district transportation for 6- 10 days. parent/guardian must meet with school representative and transportation representative to address behavior.
- 5 Step 5- Written bus report to principal. Learner will be suspended from all buses/district transportation for a minimum of 10 days. Learners may be suspended for the remainder of the year or beyond for severe incidents. parent/guardian must meet with school representative (principal, counselor, or case manager) and transportation representative to address behavior.
- 6 Severe Clause- Major rule infractions, such as fighting, swearing, threatening, or property damage will immediately result in bus and/or school suspension/expulsion.
- 7 Illegal activity will be considered Severe and reported to law enforcement agencies.

# Hinckley-Finlayson Empower Learning Center

## Learner/Parent/Guardian/Advisor Contract

### 2021-2022 School Year

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

In order for Empower learners to succeed in this unique school at the level of their highest potential, all of us in the Empower school community must play a strong part in support of the learners' learning. Learners, family members, advisors and other school staff each have special responsibilities to our community of learners. We will make a formal commitment to each other by promising to uphold our responsibilities in helping our learners and school to succeed at the highest level of excellence possible.

#### **As a learner, I will:**

1. I will attend Empower on a regular basis. I understand that if I miss class more often than the designed attendance guideline, i.e. I attend Empower less than four times a week, I may be asked to leave the Empower. If I know I am going to be absent, I will discuss it with my advisor in advance. Empower deals with attendance on an individual basis. My attendance requirements may be different from other learners.
2. I understand that I must come to Empower on time and not leave class until I have my advisor's permission. If I come late or leave early without permission, I may not be given credit for attending class that day and this will count against my attendance. Four unexcused tardies will constitute one unexcused absence. Eight unexcused absences will constitute an Empower contract violation.
3. I understand that it takes 130 hours of project time to earn a credit in Empower. I understand that my projects must have a passing grade to earn credit in Empower. I understand that I must participate in classroom activities in order to be given credit.
4. I understand that the entire school grounds are off limits to alcohol, tobacco, or drugs (except prescription) of any kind. Use of any of these products on school property is grounds for expulsion. Learners using, possessing, selling, or possessing illegal substances on school property will be turned over to police. I understand that if I am suspected of being under the influence of an illegal drug, I will be asked to leave for a period of five days. If I can prove I am not under the influence (by a lab test) the same day I am suspected, I will be immediately reinstated. If I opt not to prove I am not under the influence, I can opt to be sent to New Direction for a period of five days. In order to be reinstated after five days, I am responsible for making an appointment between the Empower staff, my parent(s)/guardian(s), and myself. Without this meeting I will not be reinstated.
5. I understand that, if I drive, I will park in designated parking areas.
6. During lunch, I will follow all rules and regulations set by the high school pertaining to lunchroom conduct.
7. I understand that Empower advisors run their classrooms as they see fit. Classroom rules will be explained to me by my advisor. Failure to follow classroom rules will cause me to lose credit for the day.

8. I understand that Empower has a three strike behavior policy as outlined in the Empower Learner Handbook.

9. I understand that if I become a discipline problem or fail to meet attendance guidelines in Empower, I may be dropped from Empower. Empower does not have detention or other forms of negative punishment. The Empower staff feels that I should want to be here to finish my high school education and get my diploma. They are here to help me reach this goal. If I am not going to be responsible enough to behave, come to class, and do my work, I will be dismissed from the program.

**As a Parent/Guardian I will:**

1. Monitor attendance and work. See that my child attends daily. We understand that she/he is encouraged to earn 6 credits per year, and if s/he is not on track there will be meetings with the parent/guardians, advisor team.
2. Communicate with staff, staying aware of what my child is learning and how (s)he is progressing. E-mail or call an advisor promptly if I have concerns or suggestions about my child's progress.
3. Support the school; meetings, help with field trips, and volunteer my time and talents when feasible.
4. Encourage learners to be respectful of staff and learners, including cultural and religious differences in the HF Empower community.

**As an Advisor I will:**

1. Assist learners in the project process and in learning required skills.
2. Provide an orderly, caring environment: Help provide a safe, orderly and purposeful process for learning, show that I care about my learners, have high expectations for learners, myself, and other staff members.
3. Provide opportunities for rigorous instruction, making available high quality curricula and a variety of instructional techniques.
4. Respect the cultural and religious differences of learners and their families.
5. Communicate frequently with families, speaking courteously and plainly, and welcoming families into the process.
6. Be clear with learners about expectations for their work and behavior, and involve parent/guardians in meeting those expectations.

Learner Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Coordinator Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Administration Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

***Graduation Standards Checklist***

All credits on this sheet must be completed before graduation.

**Arts: 1 Credit****Futures Prep: .5 Credit****Personal Health: 1 Credit (.25 credits of Driver's Ed can be used in Health)****Physical Education: 1 Credit****Language Arts Standards: 4 Credits**

Reading Literature

Reading Informational

Reading (Literacy in History/Social Studies)

Reading (Literacy in Science and Technical Subjects)

Language

Writing

Writing (Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects)

Speaking, Viewing, Listening

**Math: 3 Credits**

Algebra

Algebra II

Geometry

Advanced Topics

**Science: 3 Credits**

Nature of Science and Engineering

Biology

Chemistry

Physics

Earth and Space Systems

Physical Science

**Social Studies: 3.5 Credits**

Economics

Geography

U.S. Citizenship and Government

U.S. History

World History

**Electives: 7 Credits**

World Language (Not Required)

Work Study (Not Required)

Advisory

Service Learning

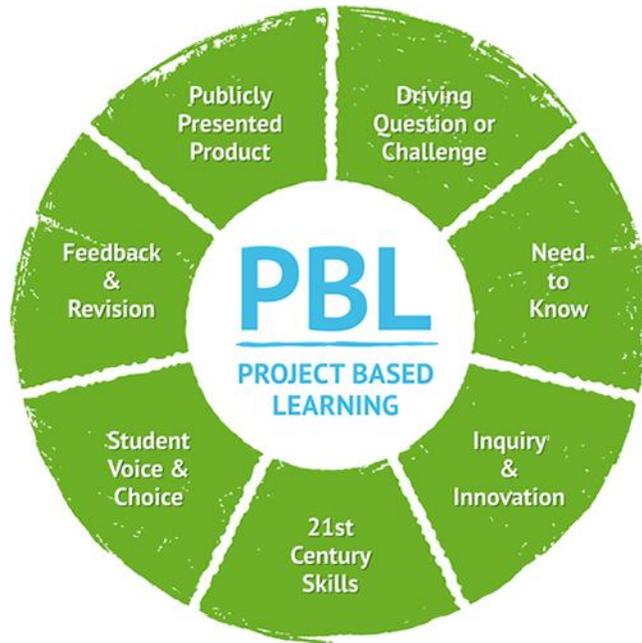
### What is Authentic Project-Based Learning?

Project--based learning (PBL) has two goals. First, it's a way for learners to complete work they feel is meaningful. And second, it's a way to fulfill an academic purpose in an authentic way. On a daily basis, **Empower** learners are engaged in both short-- and long-- term projects that involve their interests as well as their academic goals.

- Goals for project--based learning include all of the subject areas covered in traditional schools. State standards are woven into learners' projects.
- Learners have opportunities to personalize their learning.
- Learners make choices about their work.
- A project begins with a problem or challenge that does not have a predetermined solution.
- With support from an advisor, the learner designs a process for reaching a solution.
- Learners are responsible for finding and managing information.
- They ask questions, search for answers, and reach conclusions.
  - Evaluation takes place as learners discuss projects with their advisors. Learners reflect on their work and make revisions as needed.
- Learners learn to manage their time. They keep track of time spent on task and make notes in journals.
- A final product is produced and evaluated.
- Learners have opportunities to present their work to public audiences.
- Learners can sharpen their essential life skills to become successful 21st Century citizens.

To the learner:

In PBL, ideas and passion come from you. Advisors will help you generate ideas, but will not assign "homework". They are there to make sure you are submitting quality projects. This is your chance to really learn about the things you care about. parent/guardians' and advisors' roles are to help you ask meaningful questions and develop projects. The approval team is the final stamp needed before you start a project. The demand for their time is great. It is important to have a well crafted project before you submit to the Approval Team. The more time, details and quality work you put into your proposal, the more likely you will receive approval. It is not unlikely that an advisor, parent/guardian/guardian or the approval team will ask you to edit your proposal, especially as you start submitting your first project. As you get the hang of the expectations and process, it will become easier and faster to begin projects.



Items to include in a proposal:

All proposals will be completed using Project Foundry Software. We will teach you how to use the software. Each project will have the following items:

1. Title: this will show up on your official transcript.
  1. Example: Influences of Modern Music on Fashion
2. Description: a short paragraph about the course content, i.e. This project will explore how modern rap and hip-hop music has influenced the current fashion trends. I will study how the fashion industry uses music to develop, sell and market clothes to music listeners.
3. Guiding Questions: This is the main question to be explored. It is broad in nature. i.e. How does music influence fashion trends?
4. Key Concepts: At the end of this project what major concepts will you have learned.
  1. From our example:
    - i. Marketing
    - ii. History of Music
    - iii. Business economics
    - iv. Target markets
1. Resources to be used.
  1. Must include one Community Expert
  2. Library
  3. Internet
  4. Video
  5. Others
2. Product: How will you demonstrate your mastery of the learning concepts, what will you produce?
3. Learning Targets Met
4. Materials/Cost

## Assessment:

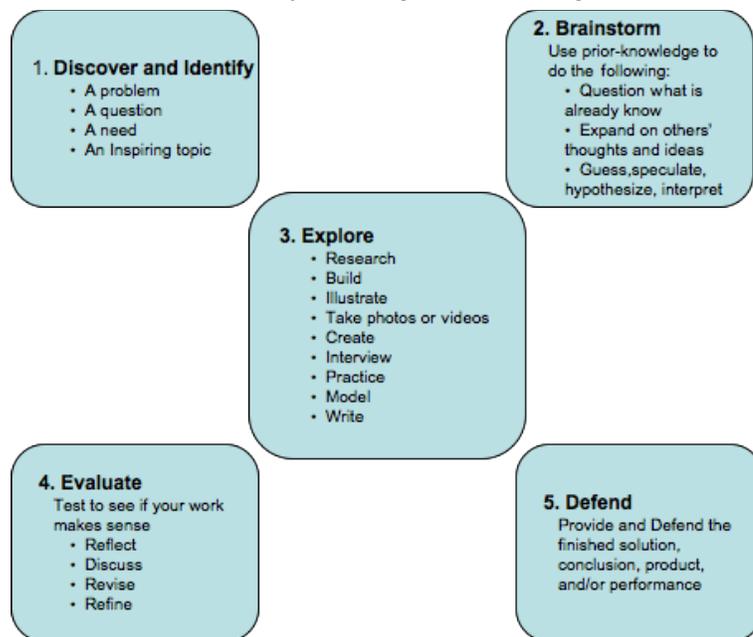
Your performance will be based on the following scale:

- Not Met: Learner has not met the learning target attempted.
- Waived: Learner has been waived the need to meet this learning target as decided by the Graduation Committee.
- Transfer: Learner completed the learning at another school
- Knowledge/Comprehension: Learner has an understanding of the information.
- Application: Learner can apply information learned to a real life situation.
- Analysis/Evaluation: Learners break information down into parts and attempt to find alternative conclusions or develop a way of to explain an informed judgment.
- Synthesis: This occurs when all skills and knowledge are used to try to develop something completely new.

Here is an example from the following question: What makes a good leader?

- Knowledge: Understanding the key qualities of leadership
- Application: Using the key qualities of leadership to run a learner meeting.
- Analysis/Evaluation: Look at a famous leader and determine whether he/she is a good leader, using key qualities or a scale to judge their contribution to the world.
- Synthesis: Using the evaluation of good leader to come up with a test to measure/predict a person's leadership potential.

After each project you and your advisor will fill out a generic rubric showing the skill level for each project. After meeting a learning target, your advisor or instructor will post the completion to your transcript and you will be able to see your progress toward graduation.



## PROJECT PRESENTATIONS and EXHIBITS OPTION

HFHS **Empower** guides learners to learn presentation skills throughout their time here. Therefore, we suggest, at attempt at least one quality public presentation and one public

exhibition per grade level at which learners will be evaluated by the attendees, including advisors.

It is recommended that learners present early in the year in case they need to redo their presentations. As the learners progress in grade, the quality of presentation should also improve.

<b>Presentation Requirements</b>	Approved by:	Length of Presentation	Project Choice	Criteria
Under 6 credits / 9th Grade	Proposal Team	5 minutes	0.75+ credit project	proposal team pre-approval, finalization prior to presentation, quality documentation of hours and resources used, and a practiced speech; individual or group presentations; project should be cross-curriculum, with in-depth research and creative problem-solving
6-12 credits / 10th Grade	Proposal Team	10 minutes	1.0 + credit project	Same as under 6 credits
12-18 credits / 11th Grade	Proposal Team	15 minutes	1.5+ credit project	In addition to above: project must benefit people in the community in some way. This can include learner mentoring.
18-24 credits / 12 Grade	Proposal Team	25 minutes	3.0+ credit project	Same as above.