

**The Ethical Community Charter School**

**FAMILY HANDBOOK**

## **Enrollment**

The Ethical Community Charter School is open to all Jersey City children (and out-of-district children if space permits), regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, ability, or academic achievement. Kindergarten students must be 5 years old by October 1<sup>st</sup>.

We recommend that all prospective parents tour the school during the school day when children are present. Please call the office to sign up for a tour. In addition, we recommend that parents attend Open Houses.

TECCS accepts all applications for students. Should there be more applications than available spaces, TECCS conducts a lottery in mid-January. Additional lotteries will be conducted periodically in the winter and spring to process applications received after the January deadline.

TECCS has a policy of sibling preference. That means that any family with a child already attending TECCS, or accepted to TECCS, will be provided with a space, space-permitting, or moved to the front of the waiting list. Parents who complete applications for incoming siblings must be sure that the application reaches the school's enrollment coordinator prior to the lottery.

## **Arrival and Dismissal**

**Early Morning Drop-off** 7:45 a.m.

### **School in Session**

School begins at 8:30 a.m. Students should arrive at any time after 8:20 a.m.

Students are dismissed at 4:00 p.m. Please be at the school on time to pick up your child.

### **Afterschool Program**

4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

## **Morning Arrival at TECCS**

TECCS staff will be present at the Giles St. entrance between 7:45 – 8:30 a.m.

Parents will drop off their children in the gym.

## **Early Morning Program (7:45 a.m. – 8:20 a.m.)**

Parents must register to participate in this program. If you are driving, you will need to find a legal parking space (which is easier to find early in the morning). If your child is coming by bus, a staff member will meet the bus.

## **Late Arrival Policy**

**If you arrive after 8:35 a.m. you must accompany** your child to the office to get a late pass before going to class. **After 8:35 a.m.**, please enter through the 95 Broadway entrance. Excessive lateness may impact a child's ability to succeed in school.

**If your child will not be attending school, the parent must contact the main office before 8:30 a.m. or leave a message during the evening (201) 984-4151.**

## **Early Dismissal**

**If you need to pick up your child before the school day ends (prior to the 4:00 p.m. dismissal), you will need to go to the office and sign the Early Dismissal Sign-Out Sheet.**

Children may not use the telephone at school to make their own arrangements.

## **Daily School Dismissal**

At the beginning of the school year, each family must complete a dismissal form indicating the adults who may pick up their child at the end of the school day. Children will not be released to anyone not listed on the form. **If someone other than the designated individuals indicated on the form will be picking up your child on a given day, you must send a note to the teacher and the main office, in the morning explaining the arrangement.**

**The office will ask for photo identification before releasing your child.**

At 4:00 p.m. students will be escorted downstairs to TECCS entrance on Giles St. and families are expected to pick up their children promptly at dismissal.

After 4:05 p.m. children not picked up will be sent to the After-School Program and the parents will be billed accordingly.

**Attendance Policy**

Regular attendance is important for an effective instructional program. Families will be contacted when students are absent. All students are required to submit a note from their parent/guardian upon return to school. A doctor’s note is required after three consecutive absences.

Students should not attend school when exhibiting signs of illness. (Such signs include a fever of 100.2 F and above; discolored nasal discharge or cough; a rash of unknown origin; or diarrhea or vomiting. See the “Health and Safety” section of this Handbook for complete signs of illness.) However, excessive absences are disruptive to a student’s academic progress.

An absence may be considered excused or unexcused. All absences require a written statement, medical verification, or prior arrangement with the administration.

A student who is absent without the knowledge of a parent or guardian will be considered truant and may be suspended by the administrator.

**Examples of Excused Absences**

- Observance of state approved religious holidays. If a religious holiday extends over a period of days, only one day of absence may be excused for the specific holiday.
- Medically verified physical or emotional illness (requires parental note with verification determination to be made by school nurse or a

doctor’s note after three consecutive days).

- Serious, acute illness, or death in the immediately family.
- Required attendance at court.
- Family trips or vacations if prior administrative approval is obtained.

It is our policy to work with families to find solutions to attendance problems.

**Security**

**All parents, guests, and visitors must sign in at the office before visiting a classroom or taking a tour of the school.**

**Safety Plan**

TECCS has developed emergency safety plans each of which was created in collaboration with the Police Department, Fire Department, and the Hudson County Department of Education.

**Lunch Program**

TECCS participates in the National School Lunch Program. We offer a variety of foods with nutritionally balanced menus. Our food vendor delivers hot and cold lunches daily.

All students are eligible for the free or reduced program, subject to filling out a lunch application. However, **all students must have an application on file, even if he/she is not participating in the lunch program.** Parents not requesting financial assistance should simply fill out the child’s name and sign the appropriate box.

Lunch is ordered monthly. All students eating school lunches must fill out the lunch order and return it with payment before the beginning of the month. Children receiving free lunch must also fill out a lunch order monthly. Credit towards the next month will be issued in the event of student illness or absence. Credit will not be issued for students who decide not to eat after ordering. It is important for parents to keep a menu calendar and mark which days your child is eating in the school.

Students may bring their lunches to school in lunch boxes or paper bags. We do not provide refrigeration, heating, or utensils. Please include everything your child will need when the lunch is packed.

The trading of lunch items among students is prohibited. Many children have serious allergies.

Carbonated beverages, candy, and other items containing large amounts of sugar are not nutritious and therefore are not permitted in school. It takes constant awareness on everyone's part to help students develop nutritious eating habits.

### **Before School/Afterschool Program**

TECCS offers programs before school beginning at 7:45 a.m. and after school until 6:00 p.m. for all students. Please contact the office for information.

### **School Life**

#### **Dress and Grooming**

The purpose of this student dress code is to promote high standards of conduct and behavior among students, to instill a sense of personal pride, and to develop and maintain a wholesome learning environment that will contribute to academic achievement. The Board of Trustees acknowledges that proper dress and attire is an important part of the school program. The Board also recognizes that each student's mode of dress and grooming is an expression of personal style and individual preference. TECCS students need to dress in clothes appropriate for work and play by following these guidelines:

1. Shoes must permit students to run and walk safely. Students may wear plain sneakers (no wheels, bells/whistles), shoes, or sandals that are flat and with a back.
2. Shorts, skirts, and dresses must fall below the student's fingers when his/her arms at his/her side.
3. Shirts must cover the body without falling off the shoulder or exposing the

torso. No undergarments should be seen.

4. Clothing may not have words or images referring to violence, sex, alcohol, drugs, or profanity.
  5. Hats, bandanas, scarves, and sunglasses may not be worn during school hours.
- Our school colors are hunter green and khaki. For School Spirit Days, students are urged to dress in these colors.

This policy will be reviewed periodically.

#### **Cell Phones and Electronics**

We ask that students refrain from bringing toys of any kind to school. Electronic gadgets such as iPods, Gameboys, etc. should be left at home since the school cannot guarantee the security of such expensive items.

**We do understand the importance of parent communication with children after school hours.** Any student who has a cell phone will be asked to turn it into their teacher in Homeroom until dismissal. Please call the school office if you need to communicate with your child during school hours.

#### **Field Trips**

Field trips are an important part of the curriculum at TECCS and each class is expected to have a number of trips during the year. All parents should sign a release for walking trips in Jersey City before the school year begins. A permission slip must be signed for each trip involving transportation or your child will not be able to participate. Notices and permission slips will be sent home before each field trip. Please return these forms in a timely manner.

Scholarships will be available for students who qualify.

Rules of safety and behavioral expectations are discussed with students and adults before every field trip. Children who are not able to follow directions or basic rules of safety will not be permitted to participate.

### **Holidays**

A central strength of TECCS is the diversity of its members. To protect and maintain this diversity, TECCS does not celebrate religious holidays in the course of the school year, nor are holidays used to drive the curriculum. Religion and cultures may be appropriately explored as part of the curriculum and in response to children's questions. Children and parents are encouraged to share and discuss their particular customs, traditions, foods, and songs with the class and teachers.

### **Birthdays**

Please do not distribute invitations to your child's out-of-school birthday party at school.

In-school celebration of your child's birthday, are limited to 15 minutes during snack time. Healthy foods are encouraged. Goody bags are not permitted. Donation of books or school supplies are a constructive way of celebrating your child's birthday. Coordinate any classroom celebration with your child's teacher.

### **Health and Safety**

#### **Immunization Records/Health Forms**

Each child must be immunized in accordance with state requirements for children enrolled in school. According to New Jersey State Law, each child must have an annual physical examination on file with the school nurse.

#### **Sick or Injured Children**

School personnel are trained in methods of dealing with illness or injury. A parent will receive a call from the school if the nurse, teacher, or office staff thinks there is a need. It is imperative, therefore, that parents provide phone numbers to call in case of emergency and that these numbers are kept up-to-date.

At the beginning of the school year, parents may give permission for school personnel to treat minor scrapes and bruises. More

serious injuries are recorded on an accident form and will be reported to a parent before the student leaves school, or sooner, as appropriate.

A child who is not well enough to go outdoors is not well enough to come to school. Outside recess is a regular part of our daily schedule. It is the parent's responsibility to make certain that your child is appropriately clothed. During cold weather seasons, children should be dressed appropriately for outdoor recess, including hats and gloves.

### **Medication**

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

If prescription medication or non-prescription medicine (such as Tylenol) needs to be administered in school, the school nurse cannot administer it nor may other school personnel without a physician's consent form. These forms are available in the office.

### **Accident Insurance**

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

### **Custody Issues**

Please inform us in writing of any special arrangements or restrictions pertaining to your child and his/her custody.

### **Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect**

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

### **Absence Due to Illness**

When your child returns to school after an absence or illness, he or she must have a written note explaining the circumstances.

If a child is absent for more than 3 consecutive days, a doctor's note must be brought to school on the child's return.

We understand the difficulty for working parents. Nonetheless, to ensure a healthy recovery and prevent the spread of illness to other children and staff, it is important for your child to remain home until he/she is symptom free.

### **When to Keep Children at Home**

To keep our classes generally healthy, the fundamental rule is:

- children must be kept home when they are ill,
- or if you suspect they are coming down with something,
- until you are quite sure they are well again.

Students with a fever of 100.2 degrees and above should not be sent to school. They must be fever-free for at least 24 hours before returning to class. One normal reading is not sufficient.

A child who has a cold should stay at home until nasal secretions are clear. Children with drainage or discolored nasal discharge or cough should also remain home. One of the most common ways for viruses and colds to be spread is from droplet infection. If your child has a persistent cough, he/she should be seen by your family physician to rule out bronchitis. A child with severe cough and/or a deep, wet-sounding cough (a "productive" cough) should always be kept at home.

Any child with a rash of unknown origin should be kept at home until the diagnosis is clear. Children who have received the chicken pox vaccine have been known to come down with mild cases. Chicken pox has an incubation period of 14 to 21 days. Children are also contagious 24 hours before they begin to show signs of a rash. Even though most rashes are benign, some can be contagious and spread to others in our school community.

A child who has had chicken pox should be kept home for at least 24 hours after the eruption of the last spot, and should not return until all pustules are completely dry and scabbed over.

Those suffering from diarrhea or vomiting need to be kept home from school. They should be symptom free for 24 hours before returning.

In addition, children should always be kept at home if they have:

- Episodes of acute vomiting
- Sore throat
- Yellow eyes or jaundiced skin
- Red eyes with a discharge
- Skin rashes lasting longer than 24 hours or infected patches of skin
- Swollen joints
- Visibly enlarged lymph nodes
- Stiff neck
- Blood in urine

If your child becomes ill in school or comes to school ill, he/she will be sent home. The office will call parents; it is important that a parent or designated caregiver always be available to pick up your child within one hour. We understand the difficulty of being a working parent. However, to ensure a good recovery and prevent the spread of illness to the children and staff, it is important that your child remain home until they are symptom free.

**If your child will not be attending school, the parent must contact the main office before 8:30 a.m. or leave a message during the evening (201) 984-4151.**

### **Communicable illnesses**

Respiratory Illnesses  
Chicken Pox  
German Measles  
Hemophilus  
Influenza  
Measles  
Meningococcus  
Mumps

Strep Throat  
Tuberculosis  
Whooping Cough

**Gastrointestinal Illnesses**

Acute Diarrhea  
Contagious Diarrhea  
Hepatitis A  
Salmonella  
Shigella

**Contact Illnesses**

Impetigo  
Lice (see below)  
Scabies  
Head Lice

Head lice is a problem of epidemic proportions in the United States. Over five million cases occur annually, many among school children. Head lice pass easily from child to child and are difficult to get rid of. Their presence is not a reflection on your hygiene, your child's hygiene, or the cleanliness of your home.

Checks are performed by qualified persons – generally health professionals – and are performed in a non-threatening manner.

A child found to have even one louse or nit (louse egg) will be sent home immediately. Students with nits only may return the following day if they have been treated and all nits removed. Students with live lice must stay home one more day after treatment.

It is therefore a good idea to check your children's head for lice or nits yourself. The louse egg is a small teardrop-shaped globule, clear or light tan in color. A louse egg clings stubbornly to the hair and cannot be blown away. A female louse can live up to four weeks; during that time she lays between five and ten eggs daily. Each egg matures into an adult louse in seven to ten days. Mature lice are brown wingless creatures resembling plant mites.

If your child does have lice, you should begin treatment immediately with Kwell, homeopathic remedies, or other medicated lice shampoo or soak prescribed by your physician. Please note that no treatment other than the removal of every nit is fully effective. Once one family member has been found to have lice, every other member must be checked.

**In addition:**

- Wash all underwear, clothes, pajamas, bed sheets, blankets, and towels in very hot water and dry for at least 20 minutes in a very hot drier.
- Vacuum mattresses and pillows.
- Boil or steam combs and brushes.
- Seal any stuffed animals and other non-washable items that may harbor lice in plastic bags for at least 72 hours.
- Thoroughly vacuum and disinfect rugs, backs of upholstered furniture, car seats, etc.

**Pest Management**

TECCS follows the Integrated Pest Management Plan as per New Jersey Law to control pests and minimize the exposure of children to pesticides. Please contact the School Business Administrator for further details.

**Student Discipline Policy**

We recognize the following goals for learning:

- To maintain safe, orderly, and drug-free schools.
- To learn and work in a school that has clear discipline codes with fair and consistent consequences for misconduct.
- To treat each other with courtesy and respect.
- To learn and work in a school and classrooms that have clearly stated and rigorous academic standards.
- To be supported by parents, the community, public officials, and

businesses in our efforts to uphold high standards of conduct and achievement.

Ongoing Activities Ensure a Positive Environment:

- Practicing and implementing ethics philosophy on a daily basis.
- Educating students on behavior expectations throughout the day.
- Building professional relationships and making personal connections with students and families.
- Outlining clear academic guidelines.

At TECCS, our discipline policy is based on the creation of self-control and respect for the community. At TECCS, our goal is to change student behavior and for students to develop an understanding of appropriate behavior. These are the procedures that we follow at our school:

- 1) If a child is disruptive he/she will be asked to stop and will be told the reason his/her behavior is unacceptable to the group.
- 2) If the child continues to be disruptive, he/she may be asked to leave the group. The child may return to the group when he/she and the teacher feel ready to participate.
- 3) If the behavior continues when the child returns to the group, he/she may be asked to leave the group again. If needed, the Principal will be called.
- 4) Disrespect, either in the form of physical aggression or verbal abuse, is cause for immediate separation from the group. The teacher will call the Principal.
- 5) The child's parents are called about serious behavioral issues and follow-up conferences are held as needed.

The Principal may refer students who display chronic behavioral concerns to the Pupil Assistant Committee.

TECCS staff is responsible for and will have authority over all students. Staff members will use lawful means to control the disorderly conduct of students in situations and locations within the jurisdiction of TECCS. The policy on the use of physical force will fully comply with New Jersey state law and Department of Education policy. Except in instances of self-protection or in instances when physical restraint is necessary to protect the students or others from injury, the use of physical force on students is prohibited.

Disciplinary actions involving violations of the state law (NJ 18A:37-22.1) or of the Code of Conduct will be referred by professional staff and teachers to the principal. For extremely serious infractions, the principal, following the guidelines of the state law 18A:37-2.3 may recommend to the Board of Trustees the suspension or expulsion of the student. Each case will be reviewed individually acting in the best interest of the student.

N.J.S.A 18A:37-2 cites as causes for suspension or expulsion of pupils.

- a. Continued and willful disobedience;
- b. Open defiance of the authority of any teacher or person having authority over him;
- c. Conduct of such character as to constitute a continuing danger to the physical well being of other pupils;
- d. Physical assault upon another pupil;
- e. Taking, or attempting to take, personal property or money from another pupil, or from his presence, by means of force or fear;
- f. Willfully causing, or attempting to cause, substantial damage to school property;
- g. Participation in an unauthorized occupancy by any group of pupils or others of any part of the school, and failure to leave the school promptly after having been directed to do so

- by the person(s) in charge of the facility;
- h. Incitement which is intended to and does result in unauthorized occupation by any group of pupils or others in the school;
  - i. Incitement which is intended to and does result in truancy by other pupils;
  - j. Knowing possession or knowing consumption of alcoholic beverages or controlled dangerous substances on school premises, or being under the influence of intoxicating liquor or controlled dangerous substances which on school premises; and
  - k. Assault by a student on a teacher, administrator, Board member, or other employee acting in the performance of his/her duties will result in immediate suspension from school. Due process proceedings will follow pursuant to 18A:37-2.1.

Pursuant to 18A:37-8, any student who is convicted or adjudicated delinquent for possession of a firearm or a crime while armed with a firearm or found knowingly in possession of a firearm on school property, on a school bus, or at a bus school-sponsored function shall be immediately removed from the school's regular education program. Due process proceedings will follow.

In-school suspension: Though students will continue to receive instruction, staff will place them in a location designated by the Principal with adult supervision.

Suspension: Where deemed necessary, students will be suspended from school for one to five days, depending on the severity of the infraction. School administrators will notify the parents in advance and they will be required to meet with the Principal before their child can return to school.

Expulsion: If the Principal determines that all other options have been

exhausted without the desired effect, or that law mandates the expulsion, a hearing will be arranged with the Board Chair, the School Administrator, the parents and the student. The hearing could result in a recommendation to the Board for student expulsion. The Board has the final authority for expulsion decisions.

Suspended students will be allowed to return to the classroom, while expelled students will not. Disciplinary actions will have no bearing on the student's academic standing, except in cases of academic dishonesty.

Educationally handicapped pupils are subject to the same disciplinary procedures as non-handicapped pupils and may be disciplined in accordance with their individual educational plan.

#### **Family and School Association**

TECCS welcomes and supports parent involvement and open communication.

Volunteering is a rewarding way to be involved in the educational life of your children; your children--and the school--will benefit.

#### **FSA Committees**

- Outreach and Public Relations
- Print and Publications
- Lunch Committee
- Class Parents and Hospitality
- Programs and Assemblies

Please contact your FSA President to volunteer. FSA meetings are held monthly at TECCS. All parents and guardians are invited to attend.

#### **Board of Trustees**

The Board of Trustees meets monthly to discharge its fiduciary and oversight duties as per New Jersey Law. Parents are represented on the Board of Trustees and all parents are invited to attend the meetings, which are open to the public.

Public notice of meetings is given on the school website, [www.teccsjc.org](http://www.teccsjc.org).

### **Avenues of Communication**

At TECCS we value an open and honest dialogue between parents and the school. Please bring any situation to our attention. It is school policy to address concerns on an individual basis. Please speak to your child's teacher first, then the Principal.

Parents and teachers meet and talk frequently at TECCS. It's most helpful to make arrangements ahead of time for a conference.

### **Grievance Committee**

In accordance with Charter School Law, we are required to establish an Advisory Grievance Committee consisting of both parents and teachers who are selected by the parents and teachers of the school at an annual Members Meeting. The Advisory Grievance Committee is responsible for making non-binding recommendations to the Board of Trustees concerning the disposition of a complaint brought to the board that alleges a violation of the provisions of the Charter School Program Act of 1995.

The Advisory Grievance Committee has the following responsibilities: 1) basic research of the nature and substance of the complaint, 2) interviews (if necessary) of concerned parties, and 3) development of a recommendation to the Board of Trustees.

The Board considers the Advisory Grievance Committee's recommendations as non-binding. The Board of Trustees reviews the recommendations and then makes a decision that will be binding on all parties. Appeals of the Board's decision can be made under the Charter School Program Act of 1995 (Section 15) that allows for appeals to the Commissioner of Education.

### **Back-to-School Night and Class Meetings**

In the fall of each year, parents are invited to TECCS for an evening meeting (Back-to-School Night) to learn about the classroom routines and the curriculum for their children's classes. Please regard this as a "required meeting" – the best time to get an overview of the plans and expectations for the year. This is also an opportunity to meet the parents of your child's classmates. Class meetings may be called at other times throughout the school year for a variety of reasons. Please make every effort to attend these meetings, as well.

### **Parent-Teacher Conferences**

At TECCS, teachers contact parents on an ongoing basis to discuss student progress. However, twice a year, we will have formal parent-teacher conferences.

### **Special Notices and Website**

Important information, such as a deadline for permission slips or notification of a scheduling change, may be sent home as necessary or posted on [www.teccsjc.org](http://www.teccsjc.org). Please check your child's backpack daily and the school website weekly for the Principal's and Nurse's Blogs, FSA notices, and classroom news.

### **Home Learning**

Home Learning is a meaningful extension of your child's work at school. Sometimes learning at home will reinforce concepts that are being explored during the school day. Often this will involve a parent or other family member – such as with math games or at shared reading time.