

# THE LOTUS LAMP

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## Lotus Explores Exchange Program



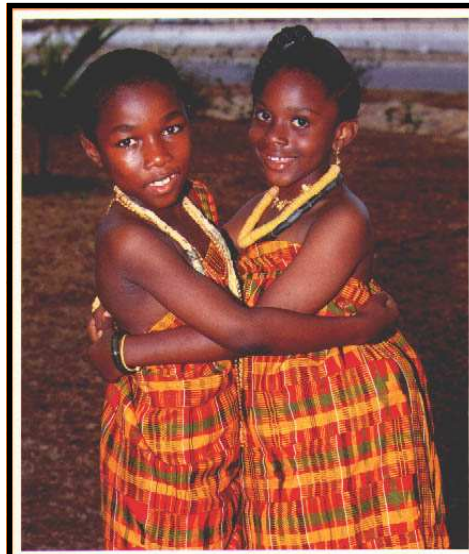
In the unending quest to be at the forefront of African-Centered education, the Lotus Academy has put together a plan for an exchange program with a “sister school” in Africa. Communication and preparation have already begun with the *Sunni Madras School*, a private elementary school in Zanzibar. The goal of the program is to prepare future leaders from our African-American community by providing them with real life experiences from the roots of their own history and heritage.

Our Kiswahili teacher, Ahmed Shariff (left), a noted scholar and native of Tanzania, will lend his expertise in coordinating this program. It will become a permanent part of the Lotus academic experience, and will feature a continual exchange of students, teachers, administrators, and resources. The exchange program will begin at Lotus Academy in September of 1999.

## “Back To Africa” This Summer

Our long awaited first sojourn to the motherland as a collective entity will take place on August 3, 1999. Our destination is the Republic of Ghana which lies on the west coast of Africa. There are approximately twenty-six people, including a few Lotus students, who have signed on to be a part of this very special occasion. It is profoundly auspicious and prophetic that this trip takes place during the year of Lotus’ celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary.

Ghana holds an important place in the history of the Maafa, dotted with castles that held so many enslaved Africans. The major purpose of the visit is to return to the home of our ancestors for rebirth, renewal, and reaffirmation of our commitment to the uplifting of people of African descent. During the ten-day stay, we will visit local schools, the home and tomb of W.E.B. DuBois, and so much more. Everyone is looking forward to ten days of collective spiritual awakening and rejuvenation.



“Learn to write well and you will be heard.”

DR. MOLEFI ASANTE

## Special Events Committee Update

Now that the Oratorical Contest has seen another successful year, Lotus' attention has turned to this year's remaining special events. Tickets are now available for the Fashion Show which will be held at the North American Motor Inn on Saturday, April 10th, from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. This unique show will feature fashion of all styles, and should appeal to almost everyone. If you have questions, or would like to reserve your tickets, please call the office.

The Science Expo is less than two months away, and it is clearly not too soon for students to begin to decide upon their projects, and prepare to put them together. The Lotus Academy Science Expo will be held in the auditorium on Wednesday, April 21st. All of the many science projects will be on display that evening, and parents are invited to come and see them and to hear the children explain them.

Lotus' first annual African-Centered Education Conference is in the final stages of planning, and invitations have already been sent out to the speakers, presenters, and workshop coordinators. A list of interested parents and other educators has already been prepared, and information will be sent out to them next month. The conference will be held at the Lotus Academy on Friday and Saturday, May 21st and 22nd. We are hopeful that the Lotus parents will make up most of the audience for this very important event.

Everyone is very excited about the Educational Achievement Awards Banquet on Thursday, May 27th at the Pennsylvania Convention Center. Parents, and others, will be notified next month about the arrangements for advance ticket sales. Also, the speakers and honored guests will be announced at that time.

# Curriculum Revision

The Lotus Academy Curriculum Committee scheduled its first of many meetings on Friday, February 26th. The committee is presently made up of two administrators, two teachers, and one parent (Marti Johnson), and it will expand as the need develops.

This committee is entrusted with the critical task of reviewing and revising the overall Lotus curriculum to both elevate our academic standards and intensify the African-Centered context. The goal is to build upon our strong points, discard those that are weak, and add those components that will make our program more effective.

One of the areas that will be explored is a restructuring of the curriculum to place more emphasis on math, science, and computer science. The increasing demands of this technological age require us to adjust our classes and priorities accordingly. Of course, increased emphasis on these subjects will also require more and better resources and educational materials.

Another area where important decisions will be made is the role that "Lotus Way" will play in the overall curriculum structure. One suggestion, for example, is to expand "Lotus Way" so as to include the disciplines of African history, African-American history, American history, world history, social studies, and geography. If approached from this standpoint, all of the content of these subjects would be covered, but they would be taught from our perspective and consistent with our philosophy of the world.

The academic program as it relates to languages is also a very important area to explore and offer solutions. There are many who feel that the best time to introduce our children to "foreign" languages, and to offer them the chance to master them is in the Lower School. Children at that age, it is suggested, are not intimidated or overwhelmed at the prospect of trying to communicate in a language that is not their first "choice". For that reason, the curriculum committee will be looking to greatly increase the quality and quantity of language instruction at the Lower School level, as well as for the Upper School students.

Finally, the curriculum committee will attempt to build upon the foundation of what presently exists. The phonics based reading program at Lotus has worked extraordinarily well in teaching our youngest students how to read, and how to use their intuitive talents to improve their reading. Lotus' use of songs, games, and other teaching tools will continue to be a valuable and vibrant part of the program. Students will be encouraged to use their communications skills to become a living part of the lesson plans that are built around them. There is much to be done, but there is much that can be utilized from our past successes and extended into our future growth.

**Tickets for the Lotus Academy Fashion Show are now available, and can be purchased in the main office. The price of \$35 includes a full lunch, as well as the show. Vendors will also be present with many different wares.**

# Independence And Education

The issues surrounding the subject of independent education will become increasingly important as the advent of charter schools, vouchers, and other developments become a part of the educational landscape. All of these variations of non-public school (and public) education will become more prevalent, but the central fact remains that true independent education is a very intricate process that requires much attention.

Many of the new parents at Lotus may not appreciate that the primary reason for our success is the fact that our independence allows us to fashion our program exactly how we choose to. That is simply not the case with charter schools or public schools that have the option to set up their programs along lines that would be consistent with our own.

It is very important that we have a clear understanding as to what is meant by African-Centered education. It has been defined by many, and there are several variations on this very basic theme.

Haki Madhubuti and Safisha Madhubuti have stated the following: "In terms of education, African centered education utilizes African and African-American cultural precepts, processes, laws and experiences to solve, guide and understand human functioning relative to the educational process. In essence, Afrocentricity represents the fact that as human beings, people of African ancestry have the right and responsibility to 'center' themselves in their own subjective possibilities and potential and through the recentering process reproduce and refine the best of themselves."

Kofi Lomotey has defined it somewhat differently. "African-centered education enables African-American students to look at the world with Africa at the center. It encompasses not only those instructional and curricular approaches that result in a

shift in students' worldview, but it engenders a reorientation of their values and actions as well. Correspondingly, an African-centered curriculum stresses that educators encourage African-American children to look at the world through an African-centered set of lenses that provides them with vision that is more focused, has a wider periphery and more depth. It involves more than mere textbooks and other curricular materials; it also encompasses a supportive understanding and encouraging school climate as the culture surrounding the curriculum."

The public schools in Detroit have formulated an approach to African-Centered education that is positive and direct. "African-Centered education in Detroit Public Schools is multicultural education with an emphasis on African and African-American culture. It is based on the belief that all humans have their physical, social and intellectual origins in Africa. Therefore, children of all ethnic backgrounds can benefit from this educational experience."

We at Lotus have to be ever mindful of the fact that our institution exists to ensure the proper education of our children, and that can not be accomplished without thoroughly immersing them in their own culture. It should be obvious that this can be done without, in any way, sacrificing a strong academic program. In fact, the last twenty-five years have made it abundantly clear that this cultural grounding has made the academic program more effective and enduring.

As an independent school, we are in a position to define our educational philosophy for ourselves. Our mission will continue to be making that definition work for our children.

## Development Office At Lotus

The Lotus Academy has endured for twenty-five years by funding its entire operation on the basis of tuition collection from parents. It has made budgeting a challenging proposition, but it has also ensured our complete independence.

As we move forward into the twenty-first century, it becomes increasingly obvious that many more resources will be necessary in order to keep our program at the level that our children deserve. This fact necessitates that we explore new funding alternatives that will provide us with the various educational resources needed to maintain the highest standards of excellence.

To that end, the Lotus Academy has begun the process of organizing a "development office" which will be overseen by a Development Administrator who will supervise the work of the different development coordinators. This office will be assisted in its work by a Lotus Academy Development Committee that will establish a set of goals and strategies. The committee has met once already, and in addition to several Lotus staff members, it will be assisted in its work by two very active parents, Pam Moss and Marti Johnson.

The development office will be directly responsible for all aspects of admission, re-admission, fund-raising, advertising, public relations, capital campaign, and community relations. It will coordinate these efforts with other parts of the Lotus administration and the parents working with C.L.A.S.

Though the development office will not be in full swing until the summer of 1999, it has gotten off to a good start as a result of the efforts of Mothuras Terri, Maureen, and Marcia. There is much more in store for Lotus as we gather the tools needed for our success and growth.

## The New Secretary At Lotus' Main Office

For those who have not been introduced to our new secretary, Cathi Moore, we would like to use this space to do it. As those who know her can attest, Cathi is very capable and composed. She has a wealth of experience with office procedures as well as people.



Cathi is a former Lotus teacher assistant and parent. She attended Penn State and Temple University before coming to Lotus. We look forward to a long-term relationship, and are deeply grateful for all that she brings to our efforts to develop a first-class educational institution.

## Early Learning Center Adding New Students

The Lotus Academy Early Learning Center is steadily increasing its enrollment and moving into the entirety of its educational program. Mothura Serquurr has been spending a great deal of time at the new facility training the teachers and

implementing the curriculum that has been designed for our youngest students. Even at this age, every attempt is made to make certain

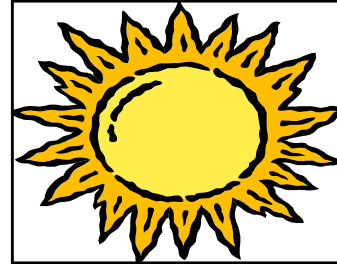


that the curriculum is truly African-Centered, as well as nurturing, in the best tradition of our heritage.

Two of our Marunas, Briana and Diarra, have adjusted well to their fellow students. As we move through the year, we look forward to an ever increasing student body and program enrichment at the Early Learning Center.

# Monthly Reminders

## Early Learning Center



- Tue, Mar. 2 – Teachers' Planning Session (ELC OPEN)**
- Fri, Mar. 12 Harriet Tubman Birthday Observance**
- Wed, Mar. 17 – Parent/Teacher Conferences**
- Fri, Mar. 26 – Seasonal Celebration (Blue)**
- Fri, April 2 – SCHOOL CLOSED (Good Friday)**

## Lower & Upper Schools (Grades 1 to 8)



- Tue, Mar. 2 – Staff Meeting - NOON DISMISSAL**
- Fri, Mar. 12 Harriet Tubman Birthday Observance**
- Wed, Mar. 17 – P/T Conferences-NOON DISMISSAL**
- Fri, Mar. 26 – Seasonal Celebration (Blue)**
- Mar. 29 – Apr. 4 SCHOOL CLOSED (Spring Break)**
- Mon, Apr. 5 – First Day Of Third Trimester**

“Culture is a product of a people’s history. But it also reflects that history and embodies a whole set of values by which a people view themselves and their place in time and space.” NGUGI WA THIONG’O