

THE LOTUS LAMP

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Inspiring Education Conference



The spirit of African learning and culture filled the rooms and halls of Lotus on Friday and Saturday. The first of what will be many annual African Centered Education Conferences brought out adults and students from New York, Detroit, Baltimore, Trenton, Wilmington, and many other places (Philadelphia!!) to share ideas and visions about the education of African children in America.

The workshops were uniformly excellent, with rites of passage and African spirituality in particular demand. The fact that the entire conference was free (made possible by everyone donating their valuable time) added to the warm, communal, and supportive atmosphere of the event and the people who were a part of it.

Dr. Nah Dove, author of *Afrikan Mothers: Bearers of Culture, Makers of Social Change* and federal Judge Carol Wells [left] are looking over the beautiful clothes from one of the vendors. Dr. Dove led a workshop and Judge Wells was a keynote speaker.

Exchange With Zanzibar Begins

Though there is precious little time left in this school year, Lotus does intend to at least prepare our students for the exchange of ideas and dedication with their brothers and sisters at the Sunni Madrassa School in Zanzibar, Tanzania. We will try to accomplish this by spending some classroom time with *all* of the students to explain how the program will work, how it will benefit all of us, and how they will be participating in it.

We will also be sharing information about our "sister school" with the students so that they can become familiar with it. They will be encouraged to send information about Lotus to Zanzibar, and to possibly start up a "pen-pal" relationship that can develop over the summer vacation.

Lotus is also gathering some items that we intend to ship to them, and we anticipate that we will be receiving something of value as we begin our exchange.



"Fundamental change in schooling can only be accomplished within the framework of fundamental change in the society's power relations.

DR. MWALIMU J. SHUJAA

Caribbean Raffle

As we move toward the end of the school year, we enter the time when thoughts of vacation cross our minds. It is also the time for our Caribbean Raffle where *someone's* vacation plans will be made a lot easier if they turn out to be the lucky winner. The raffle is being done in conjunction with Au Revoir Travel, Inc., a travel agency owned by an African-American female right here in Germantown.

All of the prizes this year will involve travel for two. First prize will be four days of travel and lodging in the Caribbean. Though we usually offer the Bahamas, there is some flexibility as to the country that the winner can go to this year. Second prize is a cruise for three days on the U.S. "Harbors of History Tours". Third prize is travel to and admission for a show in New York City which will be decided based upon when the winners choose to go.

As is explained in the 1998-99 Parent Partnership Agreement, every household is required to *sell* \$50.00 worth of the raffle tickets. The tickets (which are enclosed in this mailing) are \$1.00 apiece, and come in books of six which are sold for five dollars each. It is hoped that no household has to buy or pay for the tickets out of their own pocket or have them charged to their Lotus bill, as the quality of the prizes and the low cost of a ticket should make them easily saleable.

In addition, there will be prizes for those who sell the most tickets by Monday, June 14th. The household with the most sales will receive a \$50.00 gift certificate from "Toys 'r Us". The class that has the highest ticket sales will be treated to a final pizza, fruit, and juice "party" at Lotus on Tuesday, June 15th at lunch time.

The last day for turning in money for the raffle is Thursday, June 17th. The drawing for the winners will be handled by Lotus students (with adult supervision of course) at our Family Day outing at Nockamixon State Park on Sunday, June 27th. Ticket holders need *not* be present to be winners. Please call the office if you have questions.

African American World

The Whole Life Institute is sponsoring one of its introductory courses, "African American World Perspective". It is a five-week course that will be held at the Lotus Academy on Thursdays from 6:30-8:00 p.m. It will be taught by Hugh Clark and Badara Ndaw. There is no charge for the course, though pre-registration is required. A form for this purpose is enclosed with this mailing.

The purpose of the course is to go beyond the information discussed at the Parent Seminars, and to explore the perspective and reasoning that represents the foundation of the educational philosophy of the Lotus Academy. The first week will be an opportunity for everyone in the course to get to know each other, and to get an overview of what will be covered in the four remaining weeks. The second week will cover the forces that fuel the political process that is responsible for our world situation. The third week will look at the African psyche as it has been transformed by the American experience. The fourth week will be devoted to an in-depth examination of African spiritualism, and how it has manifested itself in the African cultures on this hemisphere.

Anyone who wants to gain an insight into the Lotus Academy educational perspective will find this course a very valuable use of his or her time.

Summer Academic Enrichment Program

The 1999 edition of the Lotus Summer Academic Enrichment Program is set to begin on Monday, June 21st. It will run for six weeks, Monday to Friday, from 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon. It will be completed on Friday, July 30th, with the only "holiday" being Monday, July 5th. Students entering grades one to six are eligible to be accepted into the program, and the subjects which will be taught are mathematics, reading, study skills, and character development.

The program is not a traditional "summer school". It is set up for students (Lotus and others) who want to strengthen or advance themselves academically over the summer months. In the past, we have had a mix of students who wanted to reinforce what they learned during the previous school year, those who wanted to do some study in advance of the coming school year, and new Lotus students who want to get a "head start" with the Lotus program.

Class size is limited to approximately ten students, and all of the teachers will be Lotus classroom teachers. The cost of the program is \$375.00 per student. A registration form is included in this mailing. Please fill it out and return it if you are interested in your child attending the academic enrichment program.

Parents are reminded that in these last few weeks of school, it is very important that we **complete** the Re-Admission process for all of our returning students. Please call the office if you have any questions or concerns.

Parent Partnership 2000

One of the challenges for Lotus in its second quarter century will be to forge a more effective and unified relationship with its parent body. There is so much to be done to ensure that our children get all that we can give them, that it simply will not happen if the parents and the Lotus staff are not working hand in hand.

The Parent Partnership Agreement for the 1999-2000 school year is an attempt to assist in that process. It attempts to do three very important things: (1) to spell out the educational mission of the Lotus Academy, (2) to define the Lotus program and the commitment it represents to our parents, and (3) to ensure that parents are aware of the expectations that are associated with the role they play in the success of Lotus.

The mission of the Lotus Academy is obviously to provide our children with the most superior educational experience that our resources will allow. As the Parent Partnership Agreement makes clear, we will continue to make this effort by way of a cultural approach to learning that is distinctly **African Centered**. The conference that we held last week is illustrative of the central role that African Centered thinking and methodology play in our program. Exploring these issues is not an option for us; it is an imperative. It is important for our parents to fully understand that this objective is the very heart and soul of our program.

A central facet of our educational philosophy is that an **independent** program offers our *only* chance for attaining our goals. Some of our prospective parents have asked whether we are a "charter" school. We let them know, without putting the charter schools in a bad light, that we get no money from the federal government, state, or school district of Philadelphia. More important, we have

no desire or intention of becoming a charter school or receiving direct governmental subsidies. There is nothing

wrong with government subsidies. The problem is that you simply can not maintain your independence over the long run if you are subject to the oversight or supervision of those who are providing the subsidies.

One of the costs of being independent is that we have to call upon our parents to assist us in ways that go beyond the paying of tuition and keeping up with their own child's schoolwork. We fully understand that this represents an additional sacrifice on the part of parents who are already giving much of themselves. However, it is only through this kind of partnership that we can not just survive, but actually succeed.

The enclosed Parent Partnership Agreement for the next school year outlines what is expected of our parents in the way of support, fund-raising, and participation. It is extremely important that every 1999-2000 parent read it over carefully so that the coming school year will not present any surprises.

As has been the case in the past, parents will be asked to sign a Registration Agreement, and it will make reference to the fact that every parent has read the agreement. Moreover, signing the Registration Agreement will indicate that the parent(s) has agreed to live up to the terms of the Parent Partnership Agreement. It should be noted that this particular agreement was initially worked out in conjunction with C.L.A.S., our parent group, so that the commitments would be in line with realistic parental responsibilities.

The Parent Partnership will be nurtured and monitored by the Lotus Development Office. It is hoped that this will help parents, as well as Lotus staff, to make this union an effective one.

Lotus Academy Music Program

One of the areas of our children's total education that we at Lotus realize is not being addressed is that of the creative arts. Despite not having a program that is ongoing and dynamic, we feel strongly that every child should have the opportunity to develop the artistic side of their brain. There are many obstacles to this being done, but the greatest of them is time. The "academic" curriculum demands are such that there is no real time during the school day to run an effective music or arts program.

Our staff and administrators have been meeting over the last couple of months with local musicians and the Mt. Airy Cultural Arts Center about coordinating a dance, instrumental and vocal music program at the Lotus Academy. The goal is to have a very small summer "pilot" program with the idea of having a greatly expanded program to begin in September of 1999.

Lotus children would be given the chance to learn African dance, to play an instrument, or how to sing, with individual instruction, and to be a part of the Lotus band or various group ensembles. The instruments that are being considered are the piano, guitar, bass, "trap" and African drums, trumpet, and saxophone. The vocal instruction would be designed to teach those who had the ability to use their voice in the most musical manner. The dance class(es) would be done on a group basis. There would also be group classes in music theory and appreciation.

For the reasons stated above, the Lotus instrumental, vocal, and music theory program would be a Saturday morning and after-school program only. Details about times and days of the week, as well as the scope of the program that is possible for its first year, will be provided to parents as they are worked out.

Every effort is being made to fund-raise, solicit contributions, and seek grants so that Lotus parents will not have to pay anything more than a modest registration fee for their children to be a part of what will be a very exciting program to develop our "future artists of tomorrow".

The Lotus Academy Teacher Of The Month

Mothuri Badara is our Teacher of the Month for May. In his usual humble fashion, he has made the transition from the Early Learning Center to Shaish I where he is teaching the first graders along with Mothura Lizz. They make a very effective team.



Badara is also working on several extra-curricular activities for the children, and the adults, at Lotus. He is one of the planners for the African Exchange Program, he is busy organizing an "Investment Club", and he will be lecturing for the Whole Life Institute.

Trips And Walks At The Early Learning Center

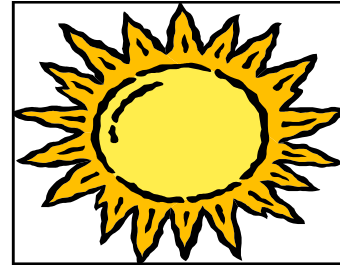
The Early Learning Center is beginning to stretch its wings and to take advantage of its very lush surroundings. Last week all of the students embarked on a trip to the Norristown Zoo.



Everyone had a great time, and as much as they enjoy their building, they certainly were enthusiastic about their travelling. The weather has been very cooperative as of late for walking and taking in the wonders of Mother Nature. Plans for the summer months at the Early Learning Center include a lot of time in the great outdoors.

Monthly Reminders

Early Learning Center



- Thu., May 27- Awards Banquet- NOON DISMISSAL**
- Monday, May 31 - SCHOOL CLOSED**
- Tue., June 1-Teachers' Planning Session (ELC OPEN)**
- Wed, June 16 - P/T Conference-(ELC OPEN)**
- Thu., June 17 - Seasonal Celebration (Green)**
- Sat., June 19 - LOTUS PASSAGE CEREMONY**
- Sun., June 27 - Family Day (at Nockamixon Park)**

Lower & Upper Schools (Grades 1 to 8)



- Thu., May 27- Awards Banquet- NOON DISMISSAL**
- Monday, May 31 - SCHOOL CLOSED**
- Tue., June 1-Staff Meeting - NOON DISMISSAL**
- Wed, June 16 - P/T Conference-NOON DISMISSAL**
- Thu., June 17 - Seasonal Celebration (Green)**
- Sat., June 19 - LOTUS PASSAGE CEREMONY**
- Sun., June 27 - Family Day (at Nockamixon Park)**

"The Black people of the world have, therefore, come at last to destiny's crossroads. They must make some fundamental changes as a *single people*."

CHANCELLOR WILLIAMS