



**LOTUS ACADEMY**  
**PARENT HANDBOOK**

## **INTRODUCTION:**

The Parent Handbook is your introductory guide to the philosophy, program, and procedures that define the Lotus Academy. In order to keep it brief and readable, there is no attempt to include every conceivable topic of interest or to cover every possible detail. Instead, the most important areas are addressed, and parents are encouraged to make their own personal inquiries about any issues or questions that the Handbook does not satisfactorily answer or cover.

## **PHILOSOPHY:**

The Lotus Academy was founded in 1974, and has operated since that time on the basis of one primary objective: creating an academically superior and culturally affirming institution that develops future leaders, life-long learners, and world citizens. Because the Lotus Academy is a private, independent, African-centered school, our students must go through a comprehensive process of admission. The school's mission is to provide its students with an academic program that will ensure a solid foundation of learning skills while guiding and directing them to be innovative and independent thinkers.

## **GOVERNING BODIES:**

The founding members of the Lotus Academy, a Pennsylvania non-profit corporation, have worked hard towards building an institution that would transcend the trials, tribulations, personalities, and pitfalls that would inevitably occur as the school grew and expanded. To that end, they have sought to develop an administrative structure of governance that was not dependent upon any one personality and one whose effectiveness would be constantly monitored and evaluated in light of the unique mission of the school.

The Founding Board of Advisors of the Lotus Academy is the actual oversight body of the Lotus Academy. It is comprised of people who have an existing insight into the overall political and spiritual philosophy upon which the school was created, based upon their long involvement and experience with the school.

*"Aya Education Management Services Inc."* (a Pennsylvania not-for-profit corporation) is responsible for the all of the school's finance, insurance, physical plant, and personnel business planning and operation. The *Aya Education* EMO also is charged with the long-range planning for continued improvement and stability of the finances and assets of the Lotus Academy, whereas the school's

Education Director is responsible for the academic program, and the Operations Director oversees all of the functions that fall outside of the instructional, curricular, and co-curricular aspects of the Lotus Academy.

The Concerned Lotus Academy Supporters (“C.L.A.S.”) of the Lotus Academy was conceptualized and mandated at the end of 1995 by the Founding Board of Advisors as a task-oriented, non-governing entity. C.L.A.S. is comprised of parents, supporters, and interested community persons. All parents are strongly encouraged to participate in and become formal members of C.L.A.S.

### **PROGRAM:**

The focus of the Lotus Academy program is on laying a strong foundation for the proper academic, cultural, and social development of its students. We envision our graduates moving on from our school, and excelling in all respects as they face the many demands of middle school or high school. Moreover, it is because we are so conscious of the importance of our students holding on to what they have learned from us as they leave us and move on, that we are able to structure our program so that the information and values that we teach become a *part* of them.

Our program is based upon the assumption that the most critical phase of a child's education is during those formative years when he or she is developing a perspective on the world, notions about right and wrong, and work habits that will endure for a lifetime. It is during this period that the child will fashion his or her sense of motivation, confidence, and standards of excellence.

We view the staff and parents of the Lotus Academy as an extension of the larger community, and our primary goal is to educate and orient our children to be the kind of adults who will be conscientious, responsible, productive, and prosperous as they contribute to the development of our communities. Our students benefit from functioning in a stimulating, personalized learning environment where our staff radiates the kind of care and concern that ensures a warm and nurturing atmosphere for them.

The Lotus Academy is made up of three separate “schools” or programs that are considered as one unified school. The Early Learning Center serves our pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students. It is a state-licensed day care center that provides our students with a foundation that will allow them to develop into the kind of scholars and role models that are envisioned by the higher grades of the Lotus Academy. The Lower School of the Lotus Academy is made up of our first, second, third, and fourth-grade students. It is a preparatory program for middle school and beyond that builds superior academic skills, study habits, and character. Our Upper School is presently not in operation, but it served our fifth,

sixth, seventh, and eighth-grade students. Their learning experience was enhanced by the fact that they had a different teacher for most of their subjects, had access to sophisticated online learning, and were actively involved in student-centered independent learning projects.

The structure of the Lotus Academy is based upon grouping all of the children by "age", according to their particular class assignment and maturity level. We feel that it is important that the children cultivate this sense of growing and elevating themselves, while at the same time benefiting from the companionship of those who are on the same developmental level as they are.

There are five of these "Age-Groups" in the Lotus Academy program, and each has its own distinctive name and attributes. The "Shana" Age Group is made up of our kindergarten and pre-kindergarten students. Those three and four-year old students at the Early Learning Center are designated as "Shana I" and "Shana II", respectively, while the kindergarten students there are referred to as "Shana III".

First and second graders in our Lower School both represent the "Shaish" Age Group, and both the third and fourth grade students comprise the "Shavi" Age Group. The first graders belong to the "Shaish I" Age Group, second graders to "Shaish II", third graders to "Shavi I", and fourth graders to "Shavi II".

Fifth and sixth graders comprise the "Shava" Age Group (Shava I and Shava II). Our oldest students, our seventh and eighth graders, constitute the "Vishna" Age Group (Vishna I and Vishna II).

In order for a student to be admitted to the Early Learning Center, he or she must be at least three years old. A three-year old child would be admitted into the Shana I Age Group. Children who will turn four years old on or before October 15<sup>th</sup> are eligible to be admitted into the Shana II Age Group. In order to be admitted to kindergarten or Shana III, a student must be turning five years old on or before October 15<sup>th</sup>. Other elements such as developmental maturity may factor into the placement decision, and the Lotus Academy reserves the right to make the final decision about Age Group or grade placement based upon the student's overall evaluation.

The operational mandates of the Lotus Academy necessitate that we carefully evaluate our students to ensure that they are truly benefiting from our overall program. It should be understood that we do everything possible to assist the student and the parent in this process, though there are some situations where despite everyone's best efforts, there is simply a bad "fit" between the school and the student. In line with this policy, all students at the Lotus Academy, without exception, are required to re-apply for admission *each and every year that they are enrolled*. This is done so that in those few instances

where a child does not appear to be benefiting from our program, we can look at that particular situation, discuss it with the parents, and make the appropriate determination for the student involved.

The decision to re-admit a student for the next school year is made by evaluating the individual progress of the child in five specific areas: (1) Academic Performance (their grades, their ability to keep up with the pace of their class work); (2) Character Development (classroom manners, proper in-school behavior, respect for others, healthy attitude); (3) Attendance Record (little or no unexcused absences and no chronic lateness); (4) Parent Participation (the parents' involvement with the Lotus Academy in those situations where events, programs, and seminars are planned for them, as well as their own interaction in the Parent Partnership Program); and (5) Parent Financial Standing (record of paying tuition and other fees in a timely manner). The most important of the above re-admission criteria are obviously the student's record for academic performance and character development, but the other criteria are considered in those situations where they are either significantly above or below what is the accepted norm for the Lotus Academy.

### **ATTENDANCE STANDARDS:**

The Lotus Academy has always taken the position that a child's attendance is a very important factor in their overall success and the success of our program. If a child is not present or is consistently late, he or she cannot receive from or contribute to the school. For that reason, we very strictly monitor your child's attendance, and have set up certain policies to detect potential problems before they develop into major obstacles.

The Lotus Academy Early Learning Center is open to all its students from 7:00 am to 5:00 pm. Classroom activities begin at 8:00 am and it is imperative that all of our Early Learning Center children arrive by that time. The formal instructional activities conclude at 3:30 pm, and parents should feel free to pick up their children after that time. Of course, there are structured and supervised activities for the children up to the time that we end the day at 5:00 pm. Parents should be reminded that all Early Learning Center children must be picked up no later than 5:00 pm, as there are very stringent monetary penalties for parents who arrive after that time.

All of our Lower School and Upper School students are expected to be at school and in class, every day, no earlier than 7:45 am and no later than 8:00 am. Classroom instruction commences promptly at **8:00 am sharp**, and it is obvious that a child cannot be prepared to start class at that time if he or she does not arrive at school on time. Children who arrive at the school after 8:15 pm

will not be admitted unless there is paperwork for medical appointments or an *unforeseeable* emergency. The academic school day concludes at 3:30 pm for all Lower and Upper School students except for those days of noon dismissal.

We realize that there will be situations where sickness, family emergencies, and the like will prevent a child from being present at the Lotus Academy or being on time. However, any child who is absent more than **three** times in any given trimester will not be re-admitted to school until a conference with the teacher has been completed.

Parents should also realize that chronic lateness is also a situation where a conference will be necessary in order for the child to continue his or her enrollment at the Lotus Academy. A conference will be required because of a student's "chronic lateness" when the student is late for school more than **five** times in any trimester. No student will be allowed to resume enrollment at the Lotus Academy unless and until the conference resolves the situation responsible for the chronic lateness on the part of the student.

#### **PARENT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM:**

One of the most important aspects of a successful educational institution is the degree to which there is effective communication, cooperation, and collaboration between the school and the family. All parents should understand that their child's education at the Lotus Academy will be greatly affected by the degree to which they (1) attend and participate in events and activities that have been established for them; (2) make a concerted effort to keep informed about important school developments; and (3) become a functioning part of the educational process by working with the Lotus Academy teachers, administrators, supporters, and other parents.

The Parent Partnership Program agreement spells out the expectations on the part of both parents and Lotus staff. It specifies that a part of this agreement between school and family is the commitment for parents to send at least one member of their household to attend and participate in the following special events that are sponsored by the Lotus Academy: (1) the two "Parent Seminars" in September; (2) the "Spotlight on Young Artists" in November; (3) the *optional* "Pre-Kwanzaa Seasonal Celebration" in December; (4) the "Oratorical Contest" in February; (5) the "Student Science Exposition" in April; (6) the "African Centered Education Conference" in May; (7) the "Awards Banquet" in June; and (8) the "Passage Ceremony" in June. All of these events are family events where the presence of the entire Lotus Academy community--- students, staff, and parents-- is a vital part of the educational, social, and cultural experience that the Lotus Academy believes that our young people expect and deserve.

One of the other ways that parents are expected to fulfill this commitment through the Parent Partnership Program is by way of that part of the registration agreement that requires every family (Early Learning Center, Lower School, and Upper School) to work at or for the Lotus Academy for a minimum of nine (9) hours over the course of the school year. The program will be administered by the Parent Partnership Coordinator who operates under the C.L.A.S. administration. The Parent Partnership Coordinator will develop and approve work assignments, and maintain records as to each family's participation towards their commitment of nine hours for the school year (three hours for each of the three trimesters).

### **FINANCIAL AID:**

The Lotus Academy offers a number of “in-house” sources of financial aid to all students and parents to offset the cost of tuition and fees, and all parents are encouraged to inquire about and apply for the various scholarships and fellowships that are available each year. The summary below covers the most important aspects of each funding source, but there are additional details that can be explained more fully by Lotus Academy administrators. Parents should be aware that there are a limited number of scholarships for each category, and they should apply for financial aid at the time that they **complete** the *admissions* or *re-admissions* application process for the coming school year.

*MERIT SCHOLARSHIPS:* All present and new Lotus students are eligible to receive Merit Scholarships in amounts ranging from \$500.00 up to a possible maximum of \$1,500.00 per school year. These scholarships are renewable, and are applied directly to offset the costs of tuition. For new students, the awards are based upon superior test scores and grades from the previous school. Present Lotus students who have outstanding “grade point averages” in their major subjects will be nominated by their classroom teacher, and their actual awards will be based upon the particular level of their superior academic achievement as compared with other Lotus students.

*KUUMBA SCHOLARSHIPS:* All present and new Lotus students are also eligible to receive these “character development” or “creativity” scholarships in amounts also ranging from \$500.00 to \$1,500.00 per school year, and they too are renewable. These scholarships are given to students who display (or whose previous record shows the clear potential for) exceptional character development, citizenship, and creative contributions to the Lotus Academy. The awards will be determined by classroom teacher recommendations and evaluations, and the results of selected interviews.

*COMMUNITY SCHOLARSHIPS:* All present and new Lotus students who reside in the geographical community surrounding the Lotus Academy are eligible for a Community Scholarship. The actual financial award is based upon the calculated **need** of the student for financial aid, and the amount may range from \$500.00 up to \$3,000.00 per school year. Eligible students are expected to demonstrate above average academic achievement, character development, and attendance. Parents who are awarded these scholarships for their children are required to be very active Lotus Academy partners, workers, and supporters.

*PARENT PARTNER FELLOWSHIPS:* All present and new Lotus Academy parents are eligible to apply for these renewable “fellowships” upon their commitment to actively assist the school in its program and special activities by working a specified number of hours each month in approved “job” functions. If the parent is approved for these awards, a yearly stipend of \$1,500.00 for 10 hours, \$2,250.00 for 15 hours, \$3,000.00 for 20 hours, or \$3,750.00 for 25 hours of work for each *month* of the school year (September to June) will be given. These fellowships are conditioned upon the parent also meeting and exceeding the requirements of the basic Parent Partnership Program agreement that includes, among other responsibilities, participation in specified activities and events and nine hours of “work” for each school year.

Parents should also be aware that there are many other sources of financial aid that are available to them that have benefited many Lotus Academy parents in past years. They include the B.A.E.O. (Black Alliance for Educational Options) Scholarship Program, the Children’s Scholarship Fund, and the Urban League Children’s Scholarship Initiative. Early Learning Center and Lower School students are also eligible for state subsidies in the form of CCIS subsidy payments to offset tuition costs if their parents meet income eligibility requirements. If you need additional information about any of these sources of financial assistance, please contact us at the main office.

### **ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT:**

One of the goals of our educational program is to work with each child to the upper limits of his or her academic ability. Our curriculum is designed to do much more than just meet the minimal requirements of the state or school district. We strive to educate each child in every grade on a level that far exceeds the average or norm, and we use a number of effective teaching methods to accomplish this. Our children's performance on the national standardized test in which we participate each year have furnished ample and consistent evidence of our high level of academic achievement. It is our intention to utilize the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (“PSSA”) test as the standardized test for the coming school years.



The Lotus Academy teaches all of the universally mandated academic subjects, but we place special emphasis on the areas of language arts, mathematics, science, and computer science because we believe that mastery of these areas will help the child in all of the other academic endeavors. All of our children are intensely involved in our highly regarded computer science curriculum and laboratory, as this area has become one of the primary centers of activity at the Lotus Academy. We also make use of trips, excursions, and outside activities for all of the children to add to that which they get from the varied elements of classroom instruction, and add a real life dimension to our instructional program.

In addition to the above, we have classes that are unique to the Lotus Academy in which we teach the children about their identity, their history, and their relationship to the world of which they are a part. These classes are what we refer to as "**Lotus Way**", and they are an essential part of our curriculum. It is during this time that we instill a sense of pride in the children about who they are, what they are doing, and the fact that they are doing it at the Lotus Academy. Our world language curriculum is actually a part of "Lotus Way", and consists of instruction in Kiswahili and possibly other languages for all of our students. They are expected to develop a true competence in these languages during the course of their enrollment at the Lotus Academy.

Our grading system is one tool by which we measure the academic and behavioral achievements of our students. The aim of the assessment system at the Lotus Academy is to (1) provide teachers and parents with a periodic and accurate evaluation as to how students are developing and progressing; (2) communicate to students the level of their work or achievements in order to motivate them to reach higher levels of excellence and self esteem; and (3) offer constructive feedback about the degree to which our educational system is effectively transmitting the information, values, and perspective to our students. It should also be noted that the actual printed record of this *Lotus Assessment Summary* or "Report Card" should not be considered as a substitute for regular discourse between the teacher and the student or parent.

All Lotus Academy students are graded at the end of each grading period or trimester as to *academic development, character development, cultural development, and attendance record*. Narratives will be included in the Lotus Assessment Summary to supplement the information conveyed by the grades, and to give some insight into both the student's potentials and challenges. For all Lotus Academy students, grades for each of the three grading periods or trimesters will depend solely on the student's performance for that particular period, and are not affected by previous trimester grades in that subject. The **final** grades, however, for all the subjects for which "letter grades" are issued will reflect where the student is at the end of the school year, and are based upon an

**average** of all of the three previous trimester grades for that school year. Final grades are **not** issued to Early Learning Center students, as the grades for each of the three trimesters (and the Summer Session) for the Early Learning Center are all “performance based”, and it is not our policy to introduce formal “letter grades” to any of our kindergarten and pre-kindergarten students.

The “report cards” will be prepared and communicated to parents by way of the aforementioned Lotus Assessment Summary at the end of each trimester in December, March, and June. There will also be three “interim reports” issued in each trimester, and they will be completed and mailed to parents no later than the second week of October, February, and April. The interim grades are also based upon the child’s performance for the trimester in which the grade is given. Each academic grade for the Lower School and Upper School is computed on the basis of specific percentages for class work, tests, homework, quizzes, reports, and special projects.

There will be four broad areas of assessment that obviously progress in curricular expectations and detail based upon the level of achievement appropriate for the particular Age Group: (1) Academic Development, (2) Character Development, (3) Cultural Development, and (4) Attendance Record. Each of them will be broken down into sub-categories as indicated below.

There are two academic awards that are available to our Lower School and Upper School students at the end of each trimester and at the end of the school year: HONOR ROLL and MERIT ROLL. The “Honor Roll” award is given to students who have all “A’s” in all of their major subjects for the *final* grading period, and the “Merit Roll” award is for those students who have “A’s” and “B’s” in all of their major subjects for the *final* grading period.

The grades for both character development and cultural development are based on the *classroom teacher's evaluation* of the student for the character trait indicated. Our assessment summaries are designed so that there is equal emphasis placed on the categories associated with both academic and character development, because we view *both* of them with equal importance.

Parents should also be aware that Lotus Academy classroom teachers typically conduct “Age Group Meetings” during the months of October, January, and April. All parents who have children in the Age Group for which the meeting is scheduled are expected to attend, as the purpose of them is to give our classroom teachers who teach core subjects the opportunity to share their goals and plans for their academic curriculum, teaching methodology, homework policy, special projects, behavior expectations, and present opportunities for students to work through any challenges they may encounter in the classroom or with their school work.

Of course, the Age Group Meeting is also an excellent time for parents to ask questions or offer input as to their understanding of the overall academic program for their child. It cannot be emphasized enough that an Age Group Meeting is **not** the time for a parent to discuss issues that relate to his or her child's individual performance or progress, or to discuss issues with the classroom teacher or the Lotus Academy that are personal and distinct to that parent. We will be happy to set up separate meetings with a classroom teacher and a parent to fully address any issues that center on a particular student's situation or that are personal in nature.

### **CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT:**

One of the central aspects of the Lotus Academy program, along with academic excellence and the African-centered curriculum, is character development. Character development is made up of several components: good manners, maturity, self-respect, concern for others, positive outlook, and discipline. It is our view that it is essential that a successful school devise ways that motivate our children to exercise self-discipline, because our philosophy assumes that "self-control" fosters success.

The social and cultural foundation of the Lotus Academy is based upon the student's attainment of moral and ethical development as a vital component in the process of his or her education. The character development process is an effort to awaken the spark of divine genius that dwells in all children through the teachings of value systems steeped in classical and traditional cultural traditions.

It also addresses the challenges of today's complex interpersonal relationships, family structures, peer pressure, societal influences, and individual aspirations. At the same time, every aspect of the program is designed to instill a strong sense of discipline, respect, and self-control in every student. The school's ability to foster effective character development depends on the degree to which it can be a collective effort, fueled by a partnership of parents, community, and Lotus Academy staff.

Offenses such as fighting, cheating, or stealing will result in **automatic dismissals** from the Lotus Academy, as well as generating massive demerits for the student involved in the extremely rare instances where dismissal is not warranted. Our consistent adherence to a zero-tolerance policy for these serious lapses in accepted behavior has virtually eliminated them from the Lotus Academy environment.

## **SPECIAL EVENTS:**

It cannot be emphasized strongly enough that one of the defining elements of the Lotus Academy is its special events. We have been told that our special events are a large part of what makes Lotus Academy so unique. For that reason, it is assumed that all parents and students will not only participate in all of our special events, but that they will offer their own special energy and add their own special contribution to them.

A vitally important event in the cultural orientation of the school is the “Seasonal Celebration”, a festive celebration held in March, June, September and December of each school year. A distinct name and color association is given to each season as a part of the Lotus Academy tradition: Mojuse (summer/red), Sotas (fall/gold), Orvelas (winter/blue), and Rocus (spring/green).

This Celebration includes all of the Lotus Academy staff, parents, students, and supporters, and renews the Lotus extended family’s connection to its spiritual and cultural legacy. The Celebration also acknowledges the change of the seasons, the occurrence of significant events such as birthdays, and the recognition of our ancestors.

The “Spotlight On Young Artists” has long been a part of the Lotus Academy experience, and takes place around the last Tuesday evening of November. With so much of the Lotus Academy curriculum and program devoted to academic achievement, the “Spotlight” provides an opportunity to showcase the creative and artistic talents of the Lotus Academy students, and occasionally the Lotus staff and parents. Any student proficient in an activity that is creative or artistic in nature is encouraged to be a participant in the “Spotlight”. Most participants are involved in dance, singing, instrumental music, drama, fashion, drawing, painting, or sculpture.

In addition to individual performers, students are encouraged to participate in group presentations. The “Spotlight” is not judged, and there is no attempt to select winners. The primary goal is to encourage the students to display their talents to an appreciative audience with a minimum of pressure or competition. Every effort is expended to motivate the students to perform or display culturally enriched artistic expressions, but “urban contemporary” presentations are also allowed if they are presented in good taste.

Another major annual event that has been cited for its unique excellence is the Lotus Academy Oratorical Contest, a celebration of African-American history, the oral tradition, and the limitless creativity of the school’s students. This most important event is held on the last Sunday of February (“*Black History Month*”). The Oratorical Contest is the time and place where Lotus Academy students powerfully display their extraordinary abilities to deliver poems and speeches that

they have written or that have been taken from the rich history of our literature and orature.

The Oratorical Contest has been dedicated to the memory of the late Honorable David P. Richardson, Jr. since his death in 1995. He was a fixture at every Oratorical Contest and served as one of the judges each and every year. Other judges at the contest regularly include directors, educators, administrators of other independent and public schools, as well as writers, journalists, lawyers, community activists, and poets. No one directly involved as a parent or staff member of the Lotus Academy is eligible to judge at the finals.

Science is such an important part of the Lotus Academy academic experience that for a number of years we have organized and showcased our very own science fair, the “Student Science Expo”, which is generally held on the last Wednesday in April. Our older students display individual projects that they have designed and worked on throughout the school year, whereas the younger students are able to participate by way of classroom group projects. Each year, judges from the scientific and technical community evaluate and rate the projects at the “Expo”, and designate those that are truly outstanding.

The month of May marks the time when the Lotus Academy can celebrate its African-centered roots and share the insights it has gathered at its annual African-Centered Education Conference. The Conference takes place on Friday and Saturday, and features speakers, workshops, demonstrations, and vendors that capture the diversity of a meaningful educational experience. The emphasis at this event is on activities and resources for the parents and students, and attempts to convey to them a fuller sense of the critical role that they play in their child’s culturally based academic and character development.

Another very important event that occurs each year in late May or early June is the Educational Achievement Awards Banquet. The Awards Banquet is an opportunity for the staff, parents, supporters, students, and alumni to come together and celebrate the conclusion of the school year. The focus is on the highlights of that year with a brief look at the previous years that have shaped the mission of the Louts Academy. With a large contingent of the Lotus Academy “extended family” in attendance, this occasion offers the opportunity to recognize the personal and collective efforts that have made the school year both memorable and successful.

Specific awards are presented at the Banquet to outstanding students, alumni, staff, community activists, and our graduates from the Early Learning Center, Lower School, and the Upper School. Former keynote speakers at this event have included Sonia Sanchez; the late Honorable David P. Richardson; Congressman Lucien Blackwell; the late Rotan Lee, Esquire; Dr. Howard Fuller; State Representative Dwight Evans, and Dr. Molefi Asante. The Awards Banquet

that celebrated Lotus' 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in May, 1994, featured the late Ossie Davis, noted actor, writer, director, and activist as our keynote speaker.

The school year at Lotus Academy culminates with its Passage Ceremony. This ceremony marks the passage of students moving from one Age Group to the next and it also recognizes the graduates who are leaving the Lotus Academy and moving to the next level of social and academic achievement in the middle school or high school of their choice. During this most ceremonious occasion, the students are also honored for achievements in academic and character development. The student body and staff all wear white for the Passage Ceremony. The students also wear a satin sash in the color of their particular Age Group.

This event has been described by parents and others as a most "unique graduation exercise." It is truly special in that the entire student body takes part in the ceremony while they also celebrate those who are central to it, the kindergarten, fourth grade, and eighth grade graduates. The piano music and drumming, with a call and response chant that is upbeat and driving, makes it easy to get total audience participation. The entire event is punctuated by the presentation of the many academic, creative, character development, and attendance awards that have been earned by the students as a result of their hard work over the course of the school year.

### **GREETINGS:**

The Lotus Academy teaches all of its students a standard way of addressing and greeting adults and each other while at school. Female adults are addressed as "Mothura" (followed by her first name), and male adults are addressed as "Mothuri" (followed by his first name). Boys are called "Maruni" (followed by their first name), whereas girls are referred to as "Maruna" followed by their first name. In addition, upon meeting each other, the Lotus "family" greets each other with "Peace, Love, and Power" (which is answered with "We Are One, Always"). Upon leaving the school or each other, everyone says, "Be With Me", which is responded to with the word "Forever".

We do this as a part of the social training in establishing common cultural standards, and to impress upon the children the importance of personal contact and good manners. It is not necessary that the children carry out these practices at home, but we certainly approve of their doing so if the parents choose to reinforce these basic notions of etiquette.

## **SCHOOL DRESS / UNIFORM:**

The Lotus Academy requires that each student wear our approved uniform, at all times, while at school. We do this for a number of reasons. First, the wearing of a uniform by everyone tends to foster a sense of commonality or togetherness. Second, it eliminates the problem of overdressing, under dressing, or large gaps in the style of what the children wear to school. Third, it has been our experience that after the initial outlay of money, it is much simpler and more economical for the parents.

Our standard dress for the boys is navy blue pants, white dress shirts (either long-sleeve or short-sleeve), and our own specially designed Kente-styled vests. Our girls in grades pre-kindergarten to second are required to wear navy blue jumpers, white blouses (either long-sleeve or short-sleeve), navy cardigan sweaters, and Kente bows. Girls in grades third to eighth wear navy pleated skirts, white blouses, and the Kente-styled vest. Athletic shoes are not acceptable as a part of the standard dress for boys or girls, and students are not allowed to wear “sneakers” in school except for those days when they are scheduled for gym class.

It is important that parents be aware of our policy of prohibiting our students from coming to school with an excessive amount of jewelry. Though we do not have a blanket policy against children wearing chains, rings, or earrings, we do reserve the right to determine what is excessive in our school environment. We also do not allow our girls to wear makeup or nail polish to school, and we definitely discourage exotic haircuts on our boys and hair glitter or colored hair spray for our girls.

## **LUNCH:**

The Lotus Academy does not operate its own lunch program, though there are a number of days where lunches are sold. Friday has been the traditional day when a slice of pizza, a piece of fruit, and 100% fruit juice are available to all students at a modest price. There are also other days where vegetarian and non-vegetarian lunches are sold, or when students are allowed to sell appropriate lunch snacks.

In those instances where parents send their child's lunch to school, it should be mentioned that there are some food items that we strongly discourage. With the natural tendency that children have to share and exchange portions of their lunch, we have received consistent complaints from parents whose children end up with food that they would prefer that they not eat. Therefore, we ask that you do not send any of the following items in your child's lunch: any soda or soft drinks, or candy of any kind.

## **TRANSPORTATION:**

As parents should be aware, Lotus Academy does not assume any direct responsibility for student transportation. However, we do offer full and free "yellow bus" service that is supplied and managed by the School District of Philadelphia for all of our first through fourth-grade students who live more than 1½ miles from our school building. We make all of the necessary arrangements with the School District Transportation Department to have each eligible student picked up from the location of his or her home each morning and taken back home each afternoon. There is no cost to the parent for this bus service. Interested parents should contact our office, and provide all of the necessary information as soon as their child is admitted or re-admitted to the Lotus Academy.

## **CALENDAR:**

Our official ten-month school year for the Lower School and Upper School is divided into three trimesters that are approximately twelve weeks in duration. There is a break between each of the three trimesters, and numerous "holidays", professional development days, and early dismissals that are listed on the Lower School and Upper School official calendars. Neither the Lower School or Upper School of the Lotus Academy follows the Philadelphia public school calendar exactly, and parents are advised to carefully review our official calendar to determine exactly which days that the school is closed or has early dismissal, as well as the dates for all of our special events.

The Early Learning Center is a *twelve-month program* from September to August that is open on every day that Philadelphia City Hall is open (i.e. a "standard" calendar of workdays and days off) with the exception of the full week between Christmas and New Year's Day and the full week before Labor Day during which the Early Learning Center is closed. Parents are advised to consult the official Early Learning Center calendar to determine which "holidays" are recognized as days that the Early Learning Center will be closed, and which "Lotus days" are observed.

Because of the diverse nature of our parent body in the way of religious orientation, cultural affinity, or political philosophy, all parents should be aware that the Lotus Academy does NOT celebrate Thanksgiving, Christmas, or Easter (or ANY religious holiday) in our classrooms, school activities, or by way of displays. We respect all of our parents' religions, and have found that allowing them to celebrate them in their homes works out best for our school community. Of course, the Lotus Academy is closed for almost all of the national "holidays" as



a practical matter because of parents' work schedules and the unavailability of "yellow bus" transportation for our children on those days.

As has been stated, the school day for all Lotus Academy students begins promptly at 8:00 am, and parents are asked to ensure that their children arrive at the school before that time (but no earlier than 7:45 am for Lower School and Upper School students, and 7:00 am for Early Learning Center students) so that they have ample time to prepare themselves for the start of classes. The school day concludes at 3:30 pm, and Lower School and Upper School parents must come to pick up their children no later than 3:30 pm unless they are taken home by school bus or are signed up with our After-School Program. Early Learning Center parents may pick their children up at any time from 3:30 pm to 5:00 pm. Parents who need to pick their children up from school **before** 3:30 pm **must** provide the school with **advance notice** of that fact by calling the office or sending a note to the office on the morning that early pick-up is necessary.

There is an After-School Program for students in the Lower School that operates from 3:30 pm to 5:30 pm which allows parents to pick up their children at any time during this time period. Students are supervised during this time, and are engaged in homework (and appropriate board games if time permits. They are also furnished with a light snack at around 4:00 pm. Parents should be reminded that all After-School Program children must be picked up no later than 5:30 pm, as there are very stringent monetary penalties for parents who arrive after that time!

There is an additional fee for all Lower School students enrolled in the After-School Program. The charge is a monthly fee of \$150.00 that remains the same regardless of the number of days in the month or how many days you use it. If your Lower School child needs to be dropped off at the school before 7:45 am, then you can make arrangements for the supervised Before-School Program. There is an additional fee of \$50.00 monthly that Lower School students must pay. Both Before-School and After-School programs *are* included in the Early Learning Center monthly tuition.