

**Statement by the Folk Arts–Cultural Treasures Charter School on
FAIR SCHOOL FUNDING**

The Folk Arts – Cultural Treasures (FACTS) Charter School was established in Philadelphia in 2005 as an elementary school in Chinatown. FACTS grew out of a grassroots community effort with a major focus on serving immigrant children and English language learners, using the tool of folk arts. FACTS has since become one of the leading K-8 schools in Philadelphia.

There have been points of contention in this city about the role of charter schools and their relationship with other public schools. We are clear on several basic points: FACTS is a public school charged with fostering innovation, sharpening critical thinking among its students and helping mold engaged citizens.

As a charter school, we have a particular role to play within the larger system of public education. That role is to strengthen, not to undermine or diminish, other Philadelphia public schools. We are fully part of the city's public education system and tied with its fate.

For FACTS and every other public school, funding from the state of Pennsylvania is crucial to fulfilling our mission. But we know that state funding levels in recent years have been inadequate to sustain basic staffing and material needs for too many school districts – including nonprofit charter schools like FACTS. That basic inadequacy is compounded by also being inequitable – shortchanging many communities particularly districts such as Philadelphia's that have large numbers of students of color and those in poverty. These shortcomings are not acts of nature.

We continue to hope that the state government may respond appropriately to the well documented educational needs of the state. But we have despaired in recent years as the state legislature has been consistently unresponsive in the fulfillment of its constitutional obligation to fund "a thorough and efficient system of public education."

The situation is urgent and extraordinary steps are now called for beyond the normal interaction between the legislative and the executive branches of government. Because of the enormous, vital educational needs and the ongoing unwillingness of the state to meet them, FACTS strongly joins in support of the legal action taken by several public districts in Pennsylvania, concerned parents, and the state conference of the NAACP to petition the state Supreme Court to secure a longer term remedy. We are in solidarity with those seeking a judicial affirmation for fair and full funding for Pennsylvania's schools.

–Ed Nakawatase, on behalf of the FACTS Board of Trustees