



# FACTS Parent Handbook

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# Welcome to FACTS!

We are honored that you have chosen to partner with the Folk Arts – Cultural Treasures Charter School in the education of your child, and we welcome you whole-heartedly into the FACTS Family.

Please always feel free to reach out to us with questions, ideas or concerns.

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## What Is a Charter School?

Charter schools are public schools that have been given a great degree of autonomy in exchange for a great degree of accountability. Teachers, parents, community agencies and concerned groups of individuals that can demonstrate a need for such a school in their area, and can present a comprehensive plan for carrying it out, may apply for a charter school.

Charter schools control their own budgets and staffing, but they must attract students and achieve results or their charters may not be renewed. We at FACTS choose our own mission, our own curriculum, our own style and methods, and our own character. At the same time, we are held accountable to meeting Pennsylvania State standards like any other public school. We take our accountability and our commitment to the children and families of FACTS very seriously.

## FACTS Mission Statement

*“Giving meaning to the lives of our children in the present while preparing them to be citizens in a democratic society.” – Grace Lee Boggs*

The Folk Arts and Cultural Treasures Charter School (FACTS) will provide children with an exemplary education that utilizes traditional arts and cultures found within their own and neighboring communities as the catalyst for critical inquiry and community engagement. Based in Philadelphia’s Chinatown community, FACTS will provide children with an education which has high academic standards, is truly community based, incorporates and respects the lives of students and their families, engages students in understanding their own cultures and communities, and engages students in understanding their role as active participants in working for a just society.

## FACTS Founding Organizations

For 30 years, **Asian Americans United** has focused on the development of young people. AAU has nurtured hundreds of youth through leadership programs; founded the Chinatown Mid-Autumn Festival; organized the Chinatown Parents' Association which won a school bus for the families of McCall School; supported South Philly High School students' efforts to demand that the school take responsibility for addressing bias violence; and has been a leading advocate in education issues around educational quality, especially for immigrant and bilingual children. Learn more at [www.aauunited.org](http://www.aauunited.org).

Since 1987, the **Philadelphia Folklore Project (PFP)** has worked to sustain vital and diverse living cultural heritage in communities in our region through collaborative projects, research, documentation and education, prioritizing folk and traditional arts in service of social change. PFP identifies local folk artists and supports their artistic growth; produces public programs advancing folk artists and traditions significant to Philadelphia communities; develops education programs benefiting children and adults; and documents outstanding practitioners and practices. Learn more at [www.folkloreproject.com](http://www.folkloreproject.com).

## FACTS: Who We Are

The Folk Arts–Cultural Treasures Charter School comes out of a history of struggle:

- for equity and justice for Asian American students and immigrant and refugee students of all races in the public schools;
- for public investment and public space in the under-served Chinatown community;
- & for public schooling that engages children as active participants in working for a just society.

After a decade and a half of public school advocacy and organizing, Asian Americans United decided to start a school that would address the particular needs of Asian American immigrant and refugee students, with an emphasis on the Chinatown community, and create the kinds of changes we had been advocating.

FACTS is designed to provide expertise and knowledge regarding the needs of Asian American and immigrant students; to bridge the gulf of isolation, unfamiliarity with institutions, and language barriers that prevent parents and community members from playing active roles in the education of their children; and to provide our students with the character, skills, and sense-of-self they need to thrive in this world.

FACTS has a special commitment and responsibility to Chinatown. We located FACTS in Chinatown because there was a lack of public investment and a lack of public space in Chinatown. Chinatown also serves as a social and spiritual hub for many Chinese immigrants and Asian Americans of all ethnicities. AAU's history of parent and youth education organizing in Chinatown also created a special commitment to this neighborhood.

FACTS teaches Mandarin Chinese because it is the language of the neighborhood where FACTS is located. We want to teach students how to engage in a respectful way, how to be responsible for, how to contribute to, and how to learn from the community of which we are a part. In addition, FACTS students – whether heritage speakers who are afforded an opportunity to retain and strengthen their bilingual skills, or non-heritage speakers who are introduced to an important world language – benefit from understanding the value of language diversity.

Although FACTS is designed to address the needs of Asian American and Asian immigrant students, FACTS' founders sought to create a deliberately multi-racial/ multi-ethnic school. Such a school best embodies a model of anti-racist education that not only values diversity but also addresses inequalities and promotes justice. FACTS is committed to helping children work cooperatively in a diverse, multicultural society.

Folk arts are the unifying thread across this diverse school body, and AAU partnered with the Philadelphia Folklore Project in the creation and ongoing nurturing of the school. Folk arts teach students and adults to value knowledge that resides in the school community and in the families and communities of our students; to recognize the contributions of ordinary people as artistic beings and culture makers; to understand and embrace their own cultural identities; and to respect and appreciate the cultures of others. Folk arts strengthen children's spirits and their communities.

Goals for the school are to provide students with an educational experience that:

- Raises their academic achievement and ability to think critically and creatively;
- Affirms language, traditional arts, and culture;
- Nurtures values of compassion and kindness;
- Instills a commitment to taking responsibility for themselves and their communities;
- Recognizes parents, elders, and community members as a constant presence in the lives of students; and
- Inspires a vision of justice and fairness and the courage to pursue them.

## **School Pledge**

We care for one another and learn together.

There is no limit to what we can learn.

Our families and our elders know important things and  
we take time to learn from them.

We learn to help ourselves and our community.

We learn to be strong and act with courage.

All people have a right to use their own languages and  
to honor their own cultures.

Creative expression is part of our lives and part of our school.

We work to build a fair and peaceful world.

The earth is our home and we must take care of it.

## Admission to FACTS

FACTS is open to all children on a space available basis within each grade. The school does not discriminate on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, disability, race, religion, national origin, intellectual ability, proficiency in English or on any other basis prohibited by law. To apply for kindergarten, a child must be 5 on or before September 1 of the enrollment year. Students are selected by open lottery. There are no admission requirements. Once all available slots are filled, all other applicants are placed on a wait list. Students will be admitted from the wait list as places become available in each grade. Preference is given to siblings of admitted students, to children of FACTS founders, to children of FACTS staff, and to Philadelphia residents.

## General Information

### SCHOOL AND OFFICE HOURS

The school administrative office is open from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm, Mondays through Fridays during the school year. Students are allowed to enter the building starting at 8:00 AM on school days. Breakfast is served to all children from 8:00 AM to 8:15 AM. Dismissal from school is at 3:15 PM.

### EMERGENCY CLOSING / SNOW DAYS

In the event of severe weather conditions or other emergencies, FACTS will generally follow the closure directives of the School District of Philadelphia (SDP), with some exceptions.

- If the SDP closes due to the weather or other emergencies, FACTS will close.
- If the SDP closes early due to the weather or other emergencies, FACTS will use its discretion.
- However, in the event of a SDP late opening due to weather conditions, FACTS will close for the entire day.

Information regarding School District of Philadelphia's school closings is available on the radio, television and on the SDP website: [www.phila.k12.pa.us](http://www.phila.k12.pa.us).

You may also call the school at 215-569-2600 to hear school closing information. When FACTS closes due to snow or hazardous weather conditions, we will post a message on the front page of our website ([www.factschool.org](http://www.factschool.org)) and we will send an automated message to your home or cell phone. Please make sure that the office has your up-to-date contact information.

### ABSENCES OR LATENESS

The school laws of Pennsylvania require children to attend school every day. A child who is not in his or her class by 8:15 is considered late. Students who are late to school must sign in for a late pass at the main office before the teacher will admit the child to class. If your child is going to be absent, please send a signed, written note to the child's teacher with as much notice as possible. If the absence is not planned, call and notify the school as early as possible on the morning of the absence and send a signed, written note to the teacher with the student when he or she returns to school. Please refer to our Code of Conduct for the complete policy regarding absence or lateness.

### DROPPING OFF, VISITING, AND PICKING UP YOUR CHILD

To ensure the safety of your children, FACTS will enforce these guidelines regarding the drop off and dismissal of students.

We appreciate your cooperation and understanding as we strictly adhere to the following rules:

Parents must notify FACTS of any changes to a student's regular after-school routine IN WRITING before 2:30. Parents must pick up a student for early dismissal before 2:30.

Details on these and other guidelines are listed below.

## **Dropping Off Your Child**

Parents are discouraged from dropping students off at school before 7:45 am as we may not have staff available to supervise them. FACTS cannot be responsible for children who are dropped off at the school before staff are on duty to watch them. Please observe all traffic and parking signs and regulations when dropping off students at FACTS.

**To Drop Off Your Child in the Morning:** Drop off your child on Shamokin Street, entering on the 11<sup>th</sup> Street side. Do NOT drop off children on Callowhill Street. It is not safe and it is not neighborly.

**If you must park your car to come in with your child:** There is a school loading zone on 11<sup>th</sup> street between Callowhill and Shamokin streets (under the railroad trestle). The sign says “No Parking during school hours”, but we do have permission to use it for loading only. This means you may park there for 20 minutes or less to pick-up and drop-off of students.

All other drop off sites are hazardous and may result in your car being ticketed or towed.

## **Visiting Your Child / Your Child’s Teacher**

You are very welcome to meet a teacher or observe your child’s class, but please make an appointment first. Teachers always welcome communication with parents/guardians. It’s important to remember that teachers are working with children the entire day and so they need to have prior notice in order to make time to speak to you. Interruptions during class time deprive children of the teacher’s attention. Please call the office in advance to schedule an appointment.

When you arrive, please stop in the main office on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. If you are visiting during the school day for any reason, please report first to the main office and sign in.

## **Picking Up Your Child**

Children are dismissed from school at 3:15 pm in one of four ways:

- 1) “Bus Students” are brought down and loaded directly onto school buses.
- 2) “Pick-Up Students” are directed to the parent or daycare pick up stations. (Kindergarteners stay in their room to wait for parents)
- 3) “Walkers” are students in grades 6-8 who have written parent permission to leave the building on their own.
- 4) “After-School Students” are directed to the assigned FACTS Afterschool program or event (with parent permission only).

See the sections below for more details about these four options and information about making changes to a student’s regular after-school routine.

## **School Buses**

Free transportation by yellow school bus is provided by the School District of Philadelphia for all children in grades 1 to 8. The SDP creates all bus routes and is responsible for hiring and supervising our bus company. All route changes take at least two weeks to process. Please ensure that any changes of address or phone number are given to FACTS as soon as possible. Students must follow bus safety procedures:

- Students must be at the morning bus stop on time. The bus may arrive anywhere from 10 minutes before to 10 minutes after the scheduled time.
- While waiting to board the bus, students must stay on the sidewalk until the bus stops and the red lights are flashing.
- Students must remain seated at all times during the ride.
- There is to be no loud noise on the bus.
- Students may not open windows without permission.
- Students must keep all parts of the body inside the bus window.
- Students are not to call or shout out of the bus window.
- Students are not to eat, drink or throw objects on the bus.
- Students must obey the driver at all times.



Please understand that students who violate these rules endanger the health and safety of those riding the bus and may be prohibited from riding the bus for a period of time or permanently. In the event that a student is removed from the bus, it will be the responsibility of the parents or guardian to make provision for transportation of the student to and from school.

If you have a concern about a late bus (your child is not picked up on time, your child is not dropped off on time, etc.), please call the Durham Bus Company: 215-537-5402 (press 2). If you have a concern about the bus route or other bus service concerns, please call the School District of Philadelphia: 215-400-5330.

### **Parent Pick Up or Day Care Pick Up**

Students whose parents or guardians will pick them up from school wait in the Parent Pick Up room until that parent or guardian arrives and signs the student out for the day. FACTS will not release a child to an adult other than the parent/guardian and others with written authorization to do so. Please make sure that you keep the school updated about those you authorize to pick up your student(s). Adults picking up students must produce identification. Students who attend a local daycare center after school are picked up by daycare center staff (with written parent release). Students may also be picked up by an older sibling (grade 6 or older) if parents have given permission.

Students must be picked up no later than 3:30 pm. FACTS staff are not available to watch students after 3:30 pm. If you are having trouble getting to the school to pick up your child, please call the school to let us know. Parents who are repeatedly late picking up their student(s) will be given a warning. After this warning, the parent or guardian will be charged a fine of \$1 per minute for every minute after 3:40 pm. Children who are not picked up by 4 pm may be brought to the 6<sup>th</sup> Police District to await your arrival.

### **Walking Home or Taking SEPTA**

Some students have written permission from a parent or guardian to leave school on their own on a regular basis. These students may first stop in the Pick Up room to collect younger siblings, if written parental permission is on file. This written permission is kept on file in the main office and with the Middle School Coordinator.

### **FACTS Afterschool Programs**

FACTS may offer afterschool programs for students. Parents and students will have an opportunity to review the options and apply for space in those programs they are eligible to join. To stay afterschool for any regular program or one-time event, parental permission in writing is required.

### **Changes to a student's regular dismissal routine**

#### ***Does your child need to leave school early? Let us know as early as possible.***

If your child needs an early dismissal, you must send a signed note of explanation to the teacher with as much notice as possible. If you are picking up a child for early dismissal, you must come to the main office and sign the early dismissal book. Students may not be released to walk or take SEPTA for an early dismissal without written permission from a parent/guardian. Students will not be released for early dismissal at all after 2:30 pm.

#### ***Temporarily switching buses is not allowed.***

FACTS does not hire the bus companies which serve our school. As such, we cannot be responsible for routes. Children assigned to a route must ride the assigned route until a formal request for a change of route is granted. Children MAY NOT be placed on a different bus route in order to accommodate a visit to a classmate, relative, etc.

#### ***Need us to stop your child from getting on his/her bus? Let us know before 2:30 pm.***

We understand that on some occasions, emergencies arise and children need to be held from the bus. To do this, you must notify the classroom teacher and/or main office – **in writing** – with as much notice as possible but before 2:30 PM. We cannot honor emergency requests to hold children off the bus that are received after 2:30 PM.

## **NO CELL PHONES**

We understand that many students may need to bring cellular phones to school in order to make contact with parents/guardians after dismissal. However, students may not use or carry cell phones during the school day. If a student is seen with a cell phone between the hours of 8:00 and 3:15, the phone will be taken and held in the Director of School Culture's office until a parent is able to visit the school to pick it up.

## **STUDENT HEALTH, INJURIES AND/OR ILLNESS**

Parents of students with special medical conditions should inform the school nurse of the problem. This information is confidential. All medications to be taken during school hours must be brought to the health room. This includes non-prescription medications. The school nurse or other authorized staff will administer all medication to ensure proper dosage. All medication dispensed in school requires a written order from the doctor that includes the diagnosis, dosage and dispensing instructions. The medication must be in the original bottle. The school nurse is on duty on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 9:30 am to 2:30 pm.

If an injury or illness occurs, we will get in touch with the parents or guardian of the student, or we will follow the instructions on the emergency contact form. Please be sure the emergency form is kept up to date. If there are any changes, please notify the office. If your child becomes ill or injured at school, you may be contacted and asked to pick him or her up. If both parents work, it is important to make arrangements for a neighbor or relative to assume temporary care for your child. Such arrangements should be indicated on the emergency contact form.

## **FOOD PROGRAM**

FACTS believes it is very important to serve healthy, nutritious meals to our students, and we are a participant in the Federal National School Lunch Program. All families are welcome to participate in the program by filling out the annual Free and Reduced Price Meal Application at the beginning of the school year. Because enough parents complete those applications, FACTS is able to provide breakfast, hot lunches, and after school snacks to everyone for free.

We serve cold breakfasts in the classrooms which primarily consist of milk, fruit, and either cereal or breakfast bars. Our hot lunches are catered by an outside vendor. Monthly menus are distributed in the Take Home Tuesday folders. FACTS ensures that there are always options for vegetarian students and we never serve pork or shellfish in our program.

If your child has any special dietary requirements due to health, religious, or cultural reasons, please inform the Food Service Manager, T. Dewi 215-569-2600 x 1073 immediately. We will do our best to accommodate their needs. FACTS observes a strict NO SHARING policy for health reasons.

## **LOST AND FOUND**

Most lost and found items can be located in the school lost and found. Fragile or expensive lost items may be secured in the main office. Please urge your child to be responsible for the care of his/her belongings. All outer clothing (jackets, hats, gloves, etc.) should be labeled with your child's name.

## **TAKE-HOME TUESDAY**

Every student has a Take-Home Tuesday 2-pocket red folder. Every Tuesday, homeroom teachers will fill and send the folder home. One of the folder pockets is for school news, notes to family, announcements, book club forms, calendars. The second pocket is for class work and homework to be taken home. The folders will be collected Wednesday morning and held until the next week. This is a feedback system for families and students, a regular home-contact tool for teachers and the school, and a vehicle for us all to send work home in an orderly manner. Please make sure your child brings the folder back each Wednesday so we can make a regular practice of sending you news and information at a regular time each week.

## **UNIFORM POLICY**

FACTS school uniform consists of:

- Pants/Skirt: Navy Blue or Khaki

- Shirts: Navy Blue, White or Light Blue
- Sweaters or sweatshirts: Blue or White, no words or lettering (with the exception of FACTS sweatshirts)
- Shoes – Must be close-toed (no sandals or flip flops), must not light up or make noise, and must not have wheels
- No hoods, hats, or coats may be worn inside the school.

FACTS Uniform Recycling encourages families to pass on outgrown uniform clothing and/or to take uniform clothing that others have outgrown. This helps the planet earth by reducing waste, and it helps families reduce costs. In the event that financial hardship makes it difficult for parents to meet the school uniform policy, FACTS will review each case and may provide support for the family toward the school uniform commensurate with need. Students who come to school out of uniform may be asked to wear clothes provided by the school. If the school does not have a uniform available for the student to borrow, parents will be called deliver a uniform to the school. Students may also be prohibited from attending class until clothes that meet the uniform policy are provided. Repeated disregard of school uniform policy may result in disciplinary action.

## **School Culture at FACTS**

FACTS places great emphasis on creating a positive school culture. This term is used to describe the experience of our students, how it feels to be a member of our school family.

To truly educate and create 'life-long learners' we must tend to the emotional health and the spirit of the individual. Children with a positive sense of self and an appreciation of those around them are best able to achieve academically in school, and to make positive contributions to our society as they grow. These are some of the features of School Culture at FACTS:

### **DAILY ACTIVITIES**

#### **Morning Meeting**

We start every morning with a special period to focus on social development – building a learning community within the class. Morning meeting time features explicitly non-academic activities. In its simplest form, it is a time during which every student is greeted and made to feel welcome; every student's name is spoken; every student is provided a safe opportunity to speak aloud. We recite our school pledge, and we conduct group or team activities to build the social skills needed to be successful in academics. In Middle School, the morning meeting is called Circle of Power and Respect (CPR).

#### **FACTS Pledge**

Our Pledge embodies many of the ideas that motivated the school's founders. It is important that our students hear these ideas and recognize how they are present in the life of our school.

#### **Close of the Day**

We have built into our schedule time at the end of each day for teachers to bring the class together. Taking the time to pause, reflect, reinforce ideas from the day, or to again acknowledge the other students is an important part of our design.

#### **Meal Time**

We seek to use this as a time to build a sense of community. Round tables were chosen to facilitate exchange and sharing among children. Students sit in mixed-grade groups to connect our big and little "brothers and sisters." A shared ritual song starts each meal. Students are given basic responsibilities for cleaning and maintaining the space. Teachers and support staff are assigned to help maintain an orderly and pleasant atmosphere.

#### **Uniforms**

FACTS has a standardized uniform policy. We feel our dress code is basic and affordable. We seek to avoid the distractions of 'fashion,' as well as to minimize the negative dynamics that can emerge with families having higher or lower budgets for clothes. We do hold regularly scheduled 'Dress Down Days' as an explicit reward for those

students who follow our dress code.

## **SHARED PRACTICES**

### **Buddies**

We use a system of pairing classes and their members. This is a powerful way to build ties among our students across many of the 'lines' that can divide them (age, race, gender, building floor). Buddy classes meet throughout the year for learning activities, games or trips. They come together to mark many of our special events as well.

### **Student of the Month**

This is a recognition procedure to acknowledge students who exemplify a given life skill. One or two students are chosen from each homeroom.

### **Class Meetings**

A scheduled part of all middle school classes, these meetings can be important times to connect students to real decision-making about their class or engage them in conflict resolution.

### **FACTS Class**

Once a week in the elementary school we set aside one class period to talk about all the things we need to discuss that we don't fit into our academic classes. At FACTS we value social and emotional learning as well as academic learning. During FACTS Class the teacher will address relationships or Folk Arts or character development. This time might be used for problem solving or conflict resolution. It might be a time to plan an event, or to meet with our Buddy Class. Most importantly, it gives us time to plan for and reflect on the special events that are part of our Ritual Calendar each year.

### **Names and Titles**

In many Asian cultures, students address their teachers using the title "Teacher", instead of "Mister" or "Miss". At FACTS, all adults in the building are addressed with the title "Teacher" because we believe that children learn important, valuable things from each of us, and we honor that responsibility. It takes a village to raise – and to educate - a child.

At FACTS we also want to emphasize the importance of a name and build an environment where names are respected as cultural treasures. We discourage changing or shortening names for ease of pronunciation.

### **Presenting Testing**

The requirement for us to administer high-stakes tests to our students can create stress in our students' lives. We take steps to lessen negative pressure and impact on our students. For example, we read a statement to all students at the start of the PSSA exams to remind them that this test is only one tool we use to assess student performance, and that no test is a measure of their value as a person. Homework is not assigned during the PSSA testing block.

### **Social Justice**

FACTS has a strong commitment to social justice. This requires that we engage students in critical, ethical inquiry. In order to facilitate the inclusion of social justice themes in the classroom, FACTS has included social justice issues in every social studies unit. Social justice discussions and sometimes, decisions to act, take place during class meetings or FACTS class. Teachers take advantage of "teachable moments" as they arise during the day. Occasionally we make a decision to act on a particular issue as a school. At these times, all teachers are expected to inform themselves of the details of the issue and to be prepared to discuss it with their class.

### **Courageous Conversations**

In order to help children to have discussions and critical inquiry into social justice issues, FACTS believes teachers must engage as well in these issues. Regular opportunities to discuss issues such as race, class, gender, sexuality, etc. are a commitment within the professional development program at FACTS. At FACTS, racist, sexist, and homophobic comments are addressed directly.

## **Language**

FACTS places high value on knowing more than one language. The USA may be the only country in the world where knowing more than one language is often considered a deficit! More than half of FACTS families speak a language other than English at home. We are committed to providing translation and making the school linguistically friendly. In order to emphasize the importance and value of language learning, FACTS offers Mandarin Chinese to all students K-8. Students, families and staff are welcome and encouraged to utilize their home language in the school.

## **Neighborhood Relationships**

FACTS draws its students from all over the city, but also recognizes its responsibility as an institution within a neighborhood. FACTS seeks to maintain strong relationships with both the Chinatown and the Callowhill neighborhoods.

## **Elder Connections**

FACTS seeks to bring elders into the lives of the children at FACTS. You will see the “grandmothers and grandfathers” of FACTS in various capacities in the school. We are an employment site, providing part-time employment to senior citizens. One community partnership brought seniors in to teach needlework to intermediate grades, teach cooking to a kindergarten, teach songs which the FACTS choir performed, and engage in oral history with certain classrooms.

## **RITUAL CALENDAR / ANNUAL EVENTS**

FACTS has sought to build a regular cycle of happenings and events. These rituals, repeated and shared activities, can serve to deepen students’ sense of belonging to a community. Here are descriptions of some of our ritual calendar events:

### **Many Points of View Day (October)**

FACTS does not close on Columbus Day. Instead, school is in session and teachers use the day to help frame special inquiry into the idea of multiple perspectives (including indigenous perspectives on Columbus). In a school as diverse as ours, it is vital that we all learn to identify, explore and respect the different points of view and experiences that make up our school.

### **Celebration of Peace (December)**

Scheduled for the week before the winter break, this event highlights songs by our choirs and classes. It is an opportunity for classrooms to engage in activities that help students address the concept and practice of peace. Each member of the school community makes and records a Wish for Peace that is displayed on class Peace Branches.

### **Lunar New Year (January/February)**

Lunar New Year is a very important holiday for many of our FACTS Families. It is the traditional time for families from many Asian countries to gather together at home and honor their families. FACTS is founded on the belief in the importance of respecting the cultures of the communities that make up the FACTS school community.

Families with Chinese background call it Chinese New Year, those of Vietnamese background call it Vietnamese New Year (or Tet), and so on. Because this is a shared observance (with some important particularities) by many of the students’ cultures present in our school, within our school we refer to this event as Lunar New Year.

There are 3 main ways we observe the day:

- 1) We close our school on New Year’s Day (or the nearest week day) to allow for family observance.
- 2) We also use the Lunar New Year as a topic of inquiry in our classrooms.
- 3) We host a school-wide Lunar New Year Celebration. We make a conscious attempt to recognize all of the national cultures that observe this day.

### **Founders’ Day (March)**

Founders’ Day gives us a chance to think about how we name and share our own history, build community, reflect on values, and teach about folk arts and social change in deep and participatory ways. (And have fun together!)

We want to tell and share the story of the founding of FACTS and what it takes for a community to come together to fight for and build something important. We want to reflect on the struggle that it took to make FACTS happen, and on other ways that people (at FACTS and beyond) actively work to challenge injustice. We want students to know how the school happened, and why (and to see their own paths to standing up for things in which they believe).

### **Folk Arts Showcase (May)**

This May performance concert by FACTS students displays many of the skills learned by our students through folk arts ensembles. Through performance and presentations we seek to help our students become “responsible culture makers.”

### **Spring Concert (May)**

This May performance concert by FACTS students displays many of the skills learned by our students through classes, ensembles and clubs. Through performance and presentations we seek to help our students become “responsible culture makers.” The Spring concert is also an opportunity for us to learn “audience skills.”

### **Play Day (June)**

This is our whole-school June get-together. We want our students to be able to learn together but also to play together. We design this day to have good fun and enjoy the company of each other.

### **Move Up Day (June)**

A simple ritual that marks individual and school-wide accomplishments in learning. We wish for our students to be aware of the cycles of the year, of our lives. Strands gather in areas marked off by grades. Students invite those in the grade below them to join them in the new grade before ‘moving up’ themselves. Members of each class share reflections of where they have been and where they are going.

### **Promotion (June)**

This is an occasion to express our pride in, and say goodbye to the young adults who will be leaving us for high school. In our promotion ceremonies we strive to allow the class members to express their feelings, as well as to acknowledge and speak to each member of the 8th grade. It is a time to recognize the role of family members and others supporting our students. Our entire school mobilizes into our schoolyard to show our collective pride and support for the class. A performance by our Lion Dance Troupe sends the class off with a wish for good fortune.

# FACTS Curriculum and Instruction

## COLLABORATIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Our school emphasizes the importance and strength of teacher collaboration. The school is divided into smaller learning communities called “clusters”:

<u>Cluster</u>	<u>Includes:</u>
Earth	a Kindergarten, a 1 <sup>st</sup> grade homeroom, & a 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade homeroom
Air	a Kindergarten, a 1 <sup>st</sup> grade homeroom, & a 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade homeroom
Water	a 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade homeroom, a 4 <sup>th</sup> grade homeroom, & a 5 <sup>th</sup> grade homeroom
Fire	a 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade homeroom, a 4 <sup>th</sup> grade homeroom, & a 5 <sup>th</sup> grade homeroom
Moon	a 6 <sup>th</sup> grade homeroom, a 7 <sup>th</sup> grade homeroom, & an 8 <sup>th</sup> grade homeroom
Sun	a 6 <sup>th</sup> grade homeroom, a 7 <sup>th</sup> grade homeroom, & an 8 <sup>th</sup> grade homeroom

Our team-based learning and teaching model emphasizes a collective approach to understanding how each child in the school progresses in key academic areas. Teachers specialize in one of two areas – either reading/writing or math/science. For example, there are two first grade teachers; one teaches reading/writing and the other teaches math/science. The teachers teach their specialized subject to a class of first graders in the morning. Then they switch students and teach their subject to the other class of first graders in the afternoon. All teachers teach social studies to their homeroom class. ESL Teachers (English to Speakers of Other Languages) and Special Education teachers work very closely with homeroom teachers for planning and delivery of instruction in order to meet diverse student needs. Children stay with the same pair of teachers for 2 years.

## SINGAPORE MATH

FACTS uses a program called Singapore Math, the mathematics curriculum used by all schools in Singapore. In constructing the math program at FACTS, we looked around the world to find the best curriculum available. We discovered that in international measures of math achievement, Singapore students routinely score first in the world when compared with other countries. In 1995 they scored first out of 22 countries. In 1999, they again scored first out of 38 countries; and in 2003 Singapore again scored top of the world from among 45 countries.

FACTS has become recognized for the quality of its math program. FACTS has served as a demonstration site for other educators and districts interested in implementing Singapore Math. Our teachers have presented the program in conferences and workshops.

## TEACHERS COLLEGE READING AND WRITING PROJECTS

FACTS uses the Teachers College Reading and Writing Projects (TCRWP) as the basic program for literacy instruction.

**TCRWP** emphasizes the interaction between readers and text. Students learn to ask questions, make connections with prior knowledge and previously read texts, and ask questions to clarify faulty comprehension they recognize has occurred.

The program includes peer conferences and teacher conferences with students but emphasizes students' independence and allows them to become successful readers outside of the classroom. Each student reads books at their own level, in addition to the books that are read aloud as a class.

There are generally three parts to Reader's Workshop:

1. Mini-lessons: During Reader's Workshop, reading instruction takes place with the whole class, small groups, partners, and individual students. Development of reading strategies is the focus.
2. Independent Reading Time and Conferring: During the independent reading portion of the workshop, students read "Just Right Books" - books they select that can be read without help. During Independent Reading Time, the teacher engages in student conferences on an individual or group basis.

3. Responding and Sharing: Students respond to the books they are reading on sticky notes or in a Reader's Notebook. Students are given the opportunity to share their thinking with a partner or in small groups.

**Writer's Workshop** has a similar format to the Reader's Workshop. It begins with a brief instructional lesson with the whole class, followed by time for students to write, and ending with a sharing time. Writer's Workshop includes instruction through shared, interactive, and independent writing across a variety of genres using the writing process. Grammar instruction is integrated into the Writer's Workshop.

## SCIENCE

FACTS just completed a revision of its Science curriculum. The curriculum consists of 4-6 inquiry-based units at each grade level. Inquiry-based means that students are encouraged to ask questions, to conduct experiments and to learn important concepts and skills rather than merely to remember a lot of detailed information.

FACTS science units by grade level:

### Kindergarten

Five Senses  
Parts of the Body  
Living and Non-living  
Life Cycles  
Properties of Materials  
Seasons and Weather

### First Grade

Plants  
Matter  
Magnets  
Air and Weather

### Second Grade

Animals  
Insects  
Simple Machines  
Sound and Light  
Pebbles, Sand and Silt

### Third Grade

Diversity of Life  
Matter and Heat  
Earth  
Solar System  
Measurement

### Fourth Grade

Human Body  
Energy  
Water  
Human Impact on the Environment  
Ideas and Invention

### Fifth Grade

Life Cycles  
Light and Sound  
Space  
Weather and Climate  
Models and Designs

### Sixth Grade

Ecosystems  
Levers and Pulleys  
Matter  
Earth's Resources  
Earth's History

### Seventh Grade

Human Body Systems  
Forces and Motion  
Energy  
Electricity  
Magnets  
Chemical Interaction

### Eighth Grade

Cells  
Heredity  
Evolution  
Human Impact on the Environment  
Problem Solving

## SOCIAL STUDIES

FACTS is developing a new Social Studies curriculum integrating our own Folk Arts Standards with Pennsylvania State Standards for Social Studies. It includes community-based investigations, an in-depth study of a particular place and an investigation into a period of history, at each grade level. Many units also involve a Folk Arts residency where students get a chance to interact with a folk artist who lived in a particular period of history or who represents a certain tradition.

It is through our social studies curriculum that students practice using the tools of social scientists, such as, conducting interviews, looking at artifacts, observing people and places, studying maps and documents from history, and taking photos and videos to document a place or event. In particular, we use the methodology of the folk arts, namely, community-based investigations – where we get information from people in our community..

It is important that students have a chance to discuss the big ideas behind a place or an event, and to think critically about what happened and how it is reported. Within each social studies unit we raise social justice issues and encourage students to make connections between different places and periods of history. We look at ways that we can be a part of positive change in our own communities.



## **CHINESE LANGUAGE**

We teach Mandarin Chinese to all of our students for a minimum of one period of instruction per week. We use a holistic approach to learning Mandarin, integrating cultural studies with language learning. We teach Mandarin so that our students become familiar with the language of Chinatown, the neighborhood in which we are situated. Teaching Mandarin also helps promote a respect for diverse languages and an understanding for how language works.

## **ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (ELD)**

ELD students are those whose primary language(s), or language(s) of the home, is/are other than English, and who may therefore require additional services in order to develop their individual potential within our school. Some students speak variations of English that differ significantly from the English used in the broader American society and in school; they may require ELD support. Some students, although born in the United States, require assistance because they use another language in their homes and have not yet gained native-like English proficiency level.

The range of services required to meet the needs of immigrant children and families is vast and complex. Students for whom English is a second language vary substantially in their needs for service. Some of the variables which account for this include the student's strength, proficiency and literacy in the first language, the level of prior exposure to English, the age of the student, previous school experience, the student's cultural and emotional context, and the demands of the curriculum. These individual differences should be reflected in the services which the student receives. One of the strengths of FACTS' ELD Program is its ability to work cohesively and collaboratively with content teachers with a student-centered approach. Curricula content may be modified or accommodated for students to have full access to learning, but core content and concepts are not diluted and must be grade and standard appropriate. The collaborative and flexible model has earned the program international recognition. FACTS' ELD Program has been deemed as a model program; therefore, the school has been a hub for researchers and visitors. All members of the school community are welcome to access a full version of the ELD Program Handbook located in the main office.

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM**

The Special Education Program at FACTS provides services to eligible students in all grades. We currently have a Special Education Supervisor, five special education teachers, a school psychologist, a speech and language pathologist, and an occupational therapist, all of whom serve children based on their individual needs. Special education services vary from child to child but may include modifications and accommodations in the general education classroom, or a co-teaching environment where a special education and a general education teacher teach together in a classroom, or small group pull-out with a special education teacher. All teachers at FACTS work collaboratively to serve students with disabilities so that they meet their academic and social goals. All students are welcomed as part of the FACTS community, and we encourage all students to participate in the classroom as much as possible. Services are outlined in each student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). The IEP is based on the multi-disciplinary evaluation and is created with teacher, parent, and child study team input to best meet the needs of each student.

The special education identification process generally begins through referral by either a parent/guardian or the Response to Intervention (RTI) team, which is comprised of grade teachers and support staff. The child is referred for an evaluation, which is conducted by a school psychologist, after the school has received written consent from the parent/guardian. If the child meets the eligibility criteria, an IEP is developed by the team at a meeting. Finally, special education services can begin when the school has obtained written permission from the parent/guardian through a document entitled the Notice of Recommended Educational Placement (NOREP). Special education services are provided collaboratively; the school and parents work as a team to support each individual student.

## **RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION (RTI)**

FACTS' Response to Intervention (RTI) Process is a three-tiered, collaborative process by which we identify barriers to learning and remove those barriers by accessing internal (school-based) and external (community-based) resources. The heart of RTI is the classroom, where the classroom teacher analyzes the strengths and learning needs of his or her students and adapts instruction and the environment to create optimal learning conditions.

A grade level team of classroom teachers, special education and ESOL teachers meet once a week to talk about any students they have concerns about. The student's strengths and weaknesses are identified, and the team develops specific goals for the student and makes modifications in the classroom that will support that student's learning (Tier 1). If the concerns continue, the student may receive additional support from a tutor or teacher (Tier 2). If the student continues to need support, he or she may be referred for an educational evaluation by the school psychologist to acquire more information about the child's learning needs (Tier 3). Parents are notified and invited to provide input during Tier 1 if their child is selected for the RTI Process, and updates are provided throughout the process.

## **FOLK ARTS EDUCATION**

The founders of FACTS believe the quality of life in urban communities is directly related to the persistence, diversity and vitality of vernacular folk cultures. Therefore, FACTS is committed to incorporating folk arts—and in particular the folk arts and heritage cultures of the communities whose children are in our classrooms— into the curriculum of the school.

Folk arts can take many forms from gardening to dance to martial arts. Folk arts are bound together by particular defining features:

- They represent time-honored vernacular education systems;
- They function as ways of teaching and passing on valued knowledge;
- They are owned by and known within the communities of our students; and
- These arts are connected to community values and convey meaning to people.

For diverse populations such as the students at FACT, folk arts serve as vehicles to bridge children to elders, school to community, and school community members to each other. Folk Arts education does not merely seek to teach students heritage or traditions, either of their own or others. Folk Arts education teaches students skills and concepts to explore cultural participation, both in their own lives and in the lives of others. FACTS incorporates folk arts in our school in a number of ways:

- Integration into subject-class content, for example:
  - Read or write about a traditional art form or the culture from which that form comes;
  - Write the stories of the dances they are learning;
  - Conduct community surveys to find people with local knowledge;
  - Record and write oral histories; or
  - Use their knowledge of textiles to define mathematical concepts such as symmetry and measurement.
- Residencies by visiting folk and traditional artists
- Ensembles, or small groups of students studying a folk art form with a master artist
- Elective classes (Middle School)
- During School Wide rituals and practices
- In our Ritual Calendar Events and Annual Celebrations
- 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Culminating Folk Arts Project

We focus on folk arts because they represent collective action and shared values. The use of folk arts embeds into the life and culture of the school the very ideals which are most meaningful to the communities themselves.

Just as children need to be physically healthy, they also need to be culturally healthy. Folk arts serve as vehicles to bridge children to elders, school to community, and school community members to each other.

In addition, all FACTS students receive weekly instruction in our regular art, music, and physical education classes from certified teachers with many years of experience as educators.

## Other Academic Information

### HOMEWORK

#### I. We Believe

Homework builds students' independent study habits and life-long study skills. Homework is most impactful when it is meaningful. Homework should help students develop responsibility for their own work and their own time. Daily reading helps students understand the importance of reading for pleasure and reading for information as life-long habits. Through reading, students discover the greater world and they learn how to learn.

We believe homework should be meaningful.

#### II. Independent Nature of Homework

Homework is meant to be completed by the student alone. Therefore, it should be primarily focused on reinforcing information and skills taught in class rather than introducing new concepts.

Not all students have access to computers or internet, so homework should not depend on technology. Use of technology may be an option, but hardcopy materials must be offered.

Not all families speak and read English, so students will need to be able to follow instructions and complete the homework on their own.

#### III. Homework Model

Grade Level	Homework Tasks	Reading	Format
K	No more than 10-15 min. <u>per week</u> (optional)	5-20 minutes (depends on time of the year and reading readiness of student)	Independent Reading with support from family
1 & 2	No more than 15-20 minutes per week	20 minutes	Meaningful and minimal weekly packet; daily reading log
3 – 5	3 <sup>rd</sup> grade: No more than 20 minutes per week 4 <sup>th</sup> grade: No more than 20 minutes per week 5 <sup>th</sup> grade: No more than 30 minutes per week	30 minutes	Meaningful and minimal weekly packet; Daily reading log
6 – 8	60 – 80 minutes	40 minutes	As required by subject; Daily reading log

#### IV. Differentiation

Homework for ESOL and Special Education students must be modified to be consistent with the student's education plans. ESOL and Special Education staff design and deliver modified homework in consultation with

classroom teacher. Modifications for other students (non-ESOL and non-Special Education) are encouraged, including the “challenge” level and other students who may struggle.

#### V. Response to Unfinished Class Work and Homework

Homework completion is reflected on report cards. Response to unfinished homework is determined by grade level teams. Losing recess or Golden Minutes could be an occasional response. Students may not miss specials or ensembles. It’s important to work with families to determine the best way of remediating missing homework and class assignments. Incentive programs may be considered.

## **TEXTBOOKS AND INDEPENDENT READING BOOKS**

All textbooks and independent reading books are loaned to students for their use during the school year. Books are to be kept clean and handled carefully. You will be required to pay for missing or damaged books.

## **REPORT CARDS**

FACTS distributes report cards three times a year and utilizes a standards-based system in grades K-5. This is a very different system than most parents are used to. Standards are what knowledge and skills we want students to reach in a subject in a grade level. There are national and state standards. FACTS uses an assessment system that lets students and parents know what students are expected to learn, and then how well they have reached the goal.

### ***What is the purpose of a standards-based report card?***

The purpose of the Standards-Based Report Card is to provide more detailed feedback to parents regarding the progress their children are making toward specific learning standards at their grade level. The report card allows parents and students to understand more clearly what is expected of students and how to help them to be successful.

### ***How does the Standards-Based Report Card compare to the letter grade system?***

Letter grades measure how well students do in comparison to their classmates. The Standards-Based Report Card measures how well an individual student is doing in relation to the grade level expectations, not the work of other students. The purpose of the Standards-Based Report Card is to provide more detailed feedback to you regarding the progress your child is making toward specific learning standards at their grade level. This allows you to understand more clearly what is expected of your child and how to help them be successful academically. It gives parents a better understanding of their child’s strengths and weaknesses.

### ***How will the performance levels be determined?***

Subject level standards are set for each grade by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Students’ ability to meet the learning standards will be determined by both their oral and written work.

## **STANDARDIZED TESTING**

In 2014, Pennsylvania Core Standards took effect. These standards identify what a student should know and be able to do at different grade levels. School districts have the freedom to design curriculum and instruction to ensure that students meet or exceed the standards’ expectations; this is a process that takes time. FACTS is in the process of aligning our curriculum to the PA Core Standards.

The annual Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) is a standards based assessment used to measure a student’s attainment of the academic standards and to determine whether school programs enable students to attain proficiency of the standards. Every Pennsylvania student in grades 3 through 8 and grade 11 is assessed in reading and math. Every Pennsylvania student in grades 5, 8 and 11 is assessed in writing. The State Board of Education approved "specific criteria for below basic, basic, proficient, and advanced levels."

***Pennsylvania's General Performance Level Descriptors***

**Below Basic**

The Below Basic Level reflects inadequate academic performance. Below Basic work indicates little understanding and minimal display of the skills included in the Pennsylvania Academic Content Standards. There is a major need for additional instructional opportunities and/or increased student academic commitment to achieve the Proficient Level.

**Basic**

The Basic Level reflects marginal academic performance. Basic work indicates a partial understanding and limited display of the skills included in the Pennsylvania Academic Content Standards. This work is approaching satisfactory performance, but has not been reached. There is a need for additional instructional opportunities and/or increased student academic commitment to achieve the Proficient Level.

**Proficient**

The Proficient Level reflects satisfactory academic performance. Proficient work indicates a solid understanding and adequate display of the skills included in the Pennsylvania Academic Content Standards.

**Advanced**

The Advanced Level reflects superior academic performance. Advanced work indicates an in-depth understanding and exemplary display of the skills included in the Pennsylvania Academic Content Standards.

There are also standardized tests for students learning English as a second language. As an institution, we want students to learn test-taking skills, to value their own performance on standardized tests and to always do their best. At the same time, we want our students, parents, and teachers to understand that these tests are not the only way to measure what a student knows and can achieve. We try hard to keep a healthy balance in the messages we send to students, parents and teachers about the importance of standardized tests.

Below is the statement that Homeroom Teachers read to their classes before taking the PSSAs.

## FACTS statement concerning PSSA exams

*Statement to be read by Homeroom teachers to their classes before the PSSA exams*

“During the next two weeks all students in grades 3 – 8 will be taking a test called PSSA. Every student your age in the state is required to take this test.

The test is important and we want everyone to do their best. The test can help the teachers at our school figure out how we can teach you better.

Sometimes, some students end up feeling bad about themselves if they don't get high marks on a big test. That's especially true of this PSSA test - they have put in here questions that they know many people in your grade will get wrong.

It is important for every student to know that this test does not tell us how good a person you are. This test does not tell us how hard you work to learn new things; it does not even tell us how smart you are or how much you are able to learn.

We want you to do your best on everything you try - but here at FACTS we are concerned about more than just test scores. We want to know, do you treat yourself and others with respect? Do you understand your own family's history and place in our city? Do you have the skills to keep on learning on your own even after you leave FACTS? These are some of the things that matter to us more than some test numbers.

At our school we love and care for all our students – kids who get high scores – kids who don't. Every one of you is a unique and special person whose importance is not measured by just one test.

Relax. We know you will do your best.”

## FACTS Positive Behavior Program Program Overview

The students at Folk Arts Cultural Treasures Charter School are encouraged to develop intrinsic motivation to do well, belong, contribute, and engage in meaningful learning and growth. As educators, it is our job to help students learn these skills so that they may become well-rounded individuals that contribute to their communities.

FACTS has adopted the Responsive Classroom Program and Developmental Designs Program in the effort to foster a caring, thoughtful and structured school environment for all students. The components that we practice at FACTS are Meeting Times, Interactive Modeling and Logical Consequences.

Time has been structured school wide for Morning Meetings, Circle of Power and Respect (in the Middle School), Class Meetings and Closings. The purpose of these meetings is to strengthen relationships within the classroom communities, set behavior standards and encourage dialogue between students and teachers on topics that are important to them. These meetings create a community within the classrooms and make the students feel like they belong to something bigger than themselves. As a result, they want to behave in a positive way in order to preserve that sense of community.

**Interactive modeling** refers to the way that we introduce and reinforce rules and procedures in the classroom. We don't just tell students what to do, but we show them through example, and then we have several students demonstrate the procedures. Early in the year, students will need to practice lining up, moving from the mat to their chairs, or from their chairs to the mat, how to shake hands and many more.

Once we have established our classroom community and introduced the rules and procedures through interactive modeling, then it is up to the teacher to enforce the rules. The following practices guide the teacher in classroom management.

### Classroom Management

Discipline at FACTS is proactive and reactive. Proactively, we work with children to create, teach and practice expectations. Reactively, we use logical consequences to help children regain control, make amends and get back on track when they forget or choose not to take care of themselves or each other.

The role of the teacher is to:

- respect each student as a significant community member
- teach students procedures and social skills
- use encouraging and empowering language to support student success
- use logical consequences to help students fix their mistakes and regain self-control
- promote problem solving as a tool to teach ethical thinking and respectful community membership

The role of the student is to:

- develop self-control
- demonstrate on-going responsible behaviors
- develop positive relationships with teachers and peers
- Internalize skills of caring, assertion, responsibility, empathy and self-control (CARES)
- trust their teachers and respect teachers' authority
- understand & respect the rules (expectations)
- develop self-respect

Each classroom teacher is responsible for creating and teaching procedures and expectations through interactive modeling as a major focus of the first six weeks of school. Effective behavior management throughout the year requires the use of three elements: reinforcing, reminding & redirecting language.

- **Reinforcing**- offers positive feedback & focuses on specific actions

*Example: “Everyone did a wonderful job getting ready for your next class. You put away your work, lined up quietly and waited quietly for my signal to leave the room.”*

- **Reminding**- used when students are beginning to get off track, after a long vacation or right before a special time

*Example: “Show me how we line up. Show me how you need to stand.”*

- **Redirecting**- used when a student is off track and needs to be stopped and pointed in the right direction. (It is important for the teacher’s tone to be nonjudgmental & without anger).

*Example: “Jan, freeze! That looks dangerous. Show me a safer way.”*

## Logical Consequences

Students need to see the sense in discipline and understand that there is logic and reason to why certain actions lead to certain results. Teachers help students notice and reflect on the connections between their actions and the consequences of their actions. Unwanted or inappropriate behaviors require logical consequences. The goal of logical consequences is to give children the chance to regain self-control, recognize the connection between their actions and the outcomes of those actions, fix problems caused by their behavior, make amends & preserve the relationships, and avoid similar problems in the future. Logical consequences are not intended to make children feel bad or “pay for their mistakes”. Instead they should give students the opportunity to learn from their mistakes and internalize the expectations. Logical consequences should be:

- **Respectful**- the teacher’s words & tone of voice communicate respect for the children.
- **Relevant**- the consequence should be directly related to the child’s action.
- **Realistic**- the consequence must be something that the child can reasonably do and that the teacher can follow through on.

### Three Kinds of Logical Consequences

1. **“You break it- You fix it”**- Children take responsibility for fixing, as best they can, any problem or mess they created. **Apology of Action is a form of “You break it- You fix it”** where children go beyond saying “I’m sorry” to making amends for the hurtful behavior. They make an attempt to fix hurt feelings and damaged relationships.

#### Examples of “Apology of Action”

Ways we hurt people’s feelings	Ways we fix people’s feelings
Call you a name	Make a list of nice things he/she could say about you
Snap or yell at you	Do something nice for you to make you smile
Laugh at you when you make a mistake	Write you a note telling you all the things you do well
Make fun of your work	Find positive things to share about your work
Intentionally exclude you from an activity	Invite you to do an activity with him/her

2. **Loss of Privilege**- Establishing rules together implies trust among everyone in the group. With this trust come the privileges of the classroom: using materials & work areas, working with friends, choosing a learning activity, joining a group. When a student breaches that trust, for example, by being careless or unsafe, a logical consequence is for the teacher to take away the related privilege until the child shows a



readiness to handle the privilege. The teacher also provides a process that helps the child learn & demonstrate that she is ready to try again.

3. **Take a Break-** Establish one or two specific places (visible by the teacher but not in front of the group). Introduce “Take a Break” with discussion & modeling. Teach, model and practice how to go to “Take a Break”, how to regain control, how to know when it’s time to leave the “Take a Break” area & how to return to the group. “Take a Break” is brief. Children return to the group when they recognize that they’ve regained control. The teacher should use a firm, calm voice when telling students to go over to the “Take a Break” area.

**Persistent or Severe Misbehavior:** If a misbehavior is persistent or severe, the teacher will write an infraction slip and refer the student to the Director of School Culture. Parents will be informed every time a student is referred to the Director of School Culture Please see the Code of Conduct (in a separate document) for more details.

# Anti-Bullying Policy

Adopted Aug 19, 2009  
Amended Jun 15, 2011  
Affirmed Sept 19, 2015

The FACTS Board of Trustees prohibits acts of harassment or bullying. The board has determined that a safe and civil environment in school is necessary for students to learn and achieve high academic standards. Demonstration of appropriate behavior, treating others with civility and respect, and refusing to tolerate harassment or bullying is expected of administrators, faculty, staff, and volunteers to provide positive examples for student behavior.

**Harassment and bullying** include any unwelcome gesture or written, verbal, graphic, or physical act (including electronically transmitted acts – i.e. internet, cell phone, personal digital assistant (pda), or wireless hand held device) which threatens, offends, denigrates, or belittles and is reasonably perceived as being motivated either by any actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression; or a mental, physical, or sensory disability or impairment; or by any other distinguishing characteristic. Such conduct includes, but is not limited to, unsolicited derogatory remarks, jokes, demeaning comments or behavior, slurs, mimicking, name calling, graffiti, innuendo, gestures, physical contact, stalking, threatening, bullying, extorting or the display or circulation of written materials or pictures. Harassment includes, but is not limited to, examples cited in this policy, and listed below. Such behavior is considered harassment or bullying whether it takes place on or off school property, at any school-sponsored function, or in a school vehicle.

**Harassment** is conduct that meets all of the following criteria:

- is directed at one or more pupils;
- substantially interferes with educational opportunities, benefits, or programs of one or more pupils;
- adversely affects the ability of a pupil to participate in or benefit from the school's educational programs or activities because the conduct, as reasonably perceived by the pupil, is so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive as to have this effect; and,
- is based on a pupil's actual or perceived distinguishing characteristic (see above), or is based on an association with another person who has or is perceived to have any of these characteristics.

**Bullying** is conduct that meets all of the following criteria:

- is directed at one or more pupils;
- substantially interferes with educational opportunities, benefits, or programs of one or more pupils;
- adversely affects the ability of a pupil to participate in or benefit from the school's educational programs or activities by placing the pupil ***in reasonable fear of physical harm or by causing emotional distress***; and,
- is based on a pupil's actual or perceived distinguishing characteristic (see above), or is based on an association with another person who has or is perceived to have any of these characteristics.

The FACTS Board of Trustees expects students to conduct themselves in a manner in keeping with their levels of development, maturity, and demonstrated capabilities with a proper regard for the rights and welfare of other students, school staff, volunteers, and contractors.

The FACTS Board of Trustees believes that standards for student behavior must be set cooperatively through interaction among the students, parents and guardians, staff, and community members of the school, producing an atmosphere that encourages students to grow in self-discipline. The development of this atmosphere requires respect for self and others, as well as for school and community property on the part of students, staff, and community members.

The FACTS Board of Trustees believes that the best discipline is self-imposed, and that it is the responsibility of staff to use disciplinary situations as opportunities for helping students learn to assume responsibility and the

consequences of their behavior. Staff members who interact with students shall apply best practices designed to *prevent* discipline problems and encourage students to develop self-discipline.

Since bystander support of harassment or bullying can encourage these behaviors, the school prohibits both active and passive support for acts of harassment or bullying. The staff should encourage students to support students who walk away from these acts when they see them, constructively attempt to stop them, or report them to the designated authority.

The FACTS Board of Trustees requires its school administrators to develop and implement procedures that ensure *both* the appropriate consequences *and* remedial responses to a student or staff member who commits one or more acts of harassment or bullying.

Consequences and appropriate remedial actions for a student who commits one or more acts of harassment or bullying may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion, in the case of a student, or suspension or termination in the case of an employee, as set forth in the approved code of student conduct or employee handbook.

Consequences for a student who commits an act of harassment or bullying shall be unique to the individual incident and will vary in method and severity according to the nature of the behavior, the developmental age of the student, and the student's history of problem behaviors and performance, and must be consistent with the Board of Trustees' approved code of student conduct. Remedial measures shall be designed to: *correct the problem behavior*; *prevent another occurrence* of the behavior; and *protect the victim* of the act. Effective discipline should employ a school-wide approach to adopt a rubric of bullying offenses and the associated consequences.

The FACTS Board of Trustees requires the principal and/or the principal's designee to be responsible for receiving complaints alleging violations of this policy. All school employees are required to report alleged violations of this policy to the principal or the principal's designee. All other members of the school community, including students, parents, volunteers, and visitors, are encouraged to report any act that may be a violation of this policy. Reports may be made anonymously, but formal disciplinary action *may not* be based solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

The FACTS Board of Trustees requires the principal and/or the principal's designee to be responsible for determining whether an alleged act constitutes a violation of this policy. In so doing, the principal and/or the principal's designee shall conduct a prompt, thorough, and complete investigation of each alleged incident. The investigation is to be completed within three school days after a report or complaint is made. The board prohibits reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of harassment or bullying. The consequences and appropriate remedial action for a person who engages in reprisal or retaliation shall be determined by the administrator after consideration of the nature, severity, and circumstances of the act.

The FACTS Board of Trustees prohibits any person from falsely accusing another as a means of harassment or bullying. The consequences and appropriate remedial action for a *person* found to have falsely accused another as a means of harassment or bullying may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion.

The board requires school officials to annually disseminate the policy to all school staff, students, and parents, along with a statement explaining that it applies to all applicable acts of harassment and bullying that occur on school property, at school-sponsored functions, or on a school bus. The Principal & Executive Director shall develop an annual process for discussing the school district policy on harassment and bullying with students and staff.

The school shall incorporate information regarding the policy against harassment or bullying into each school employee training program and handbook.

## Resources for Parents

### Code of Conduct

Information regarding discipline policies and procedures at FACT Charter School are found in our Code of Conduct. All parents and guardians are asked to read the code of conduct and go through the code with their child in order to have a thorough understanding of FACTS discipline policies and procedures. We ask you to sign that you have read the Code of Conduct.

### Parent and Student Complaint Procedures

#### Definition and Philosophy

Parents are partners with educators, administrators, and the School's Board of Trustees in their child's education. Parents shall be encouraged to actively participate in creating and implementing educational programs.

#### Complaint Procedures

The purpose of these procedures is to secure at the lowest possible administrative level, prompt and equitable resolution of student or parent complaints.

#### Special Complaints

Complaints regarding certain topics are addressed by specific policies that modify this complaint process or require an alternative process:

- Discrimination on the basis of gender
- Sexual abuse or sexual harassment of a student
- Loss of enrollment status on the basis of attendance
- Teacher removal of a student for disciplinary reasons
- Expulsion of a student
- Identification, evaluation, or educational placement of a student with a disability within the scope of Sec. 504

#### General Provisions

Unless otherwise provided by a policy referenced above, students or parents are entitled to informal conferences with administrators to resolve their complaints. If such attempts are unsuccessful, the students or parents may take their complaint to the Board. If a complaint involves a problem with a teacher, the student or parent in most circumstances are expected to discuss the matter with the teacher before requesting a conference with the principal at Level One. The student may be represented by an adult at any level of the complaint. For purposes of this policy, "days" shall mean calendar days.

#### Level One

A student or parent who has a complaint should request a conference with the principal within ten days of the time the student or parent knew, or should have known, of the event or series of events causing the complaint. The principal shall schedule and hold a conference with the student or parent within seven days of the request.

#### Level Two

If the outcome of the conference with the principal is not to the student's or parent's satisfaction, the student or parent may submit to the principal a written request to place the matter on the agenda of the next regular Board meeting. The principal will inform the student or parent of the date, time, and place of the meeting. The meeting chairperson will establish a reasonable time limit for complaint presentations. The Board will hear the complaint and take whatever action it deems appropriate. Lack of official action by the Board will uphold the administrative decision at Level Two. If the complaint involves concerns or charges regarding an employee, it will be heard by the Board in closed meeting unless the employee to whom the complaint pertains requests that it be public.

### Board Meetings

Parents and all members of the public are entitled to complete access to any meeting of the Board of Trustees, other than a closed meeting held in compliance with the Open Meetings Act. The Board must hold each public

meeting in compliance with the Open Meetings Act. Please see the dates of the Board meetings posted at the beginning of this handbook and on the FACTS website.

### **FACTS Website and Other School Policies**

FACTS maintains a manual of all academic, administrative, operational and fiscal board-approved policies. Some of those policies, which are specifically relevant to parents and the general public, are posted on our website and updated regularly. To review these detailed policies, please visit our website at [www.factschool.org](http://www.factschool.org) or contact the FACTS Open Records Officer by calling the school office at (215) 569-2600.

### **NCLB Parent Notification**

In compliance with the requirements of the *No Child Left Behind* statute FACT Charter School informs parents that you may request information about the professional qualifications of your student's teacher(s). The following information may be requested:

1. whether the teacher has met the Pennsylvania State requirements for certification for the grade level and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction;
2. whether the teacher is teaching under an emergency or other
3. provisional status through which Pennsylvania qualifications or
4. certification criteria have been waived;
5. the college major and any graduate certification or degree held by the teacher;
6. whether the student is provided services by paraprofessionals, and if so, their qualifications.

If you wish to request information concerning your child's teacher's qualification, please contact the Principal at 215-569-2600.

# **FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT**

## **Notification of Rights**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and students over 18 years of age ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to the student's education records. These rights are:

(1) The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days of the day the School receives a request for access.

Parents or eligible students should submit to the Executive Director a written request that identifies the record(s) they wish to inspect. The Executive Director will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.

(2) The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights under FERPA. Parents or eligible students who wish to ask the School to amend a record should write the Executive Director clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it should be changed. If the School decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, the School will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and advise them of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.

(3) The right to privacy of personally identifiable information in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.

One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by the School as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); a person serving on the School Board; a person or company with whom the School has outsourced services or functions it would otherwise use its own employees to perform (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist); a parent or student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee; or a parent, student, or other volunteer assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks.

A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

Upon request, the School discloses education records without consent to officials of another school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll, or is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes of the student's enrollment or transfer and if the school has been unsuccessful in its reasonable attempts to notify the parent or student of the records request.

### **Notice for Directory Information**

Under FERPA, the School must, with certain exceptions, obtain written consent prior to the disclosure of personally identifiable information from a student's education records. However, the School may disclose personally identifiable information contained in the student's educational records without obtaining prior written consent of the parent or eligible student if the School has designated the information as "directory information."

The School has designated the following categories of information as directory information for the purpose of disclosure relating to school-sponsored/school-affiliated purposes:

1. Student name;
2. Photographs (including video image);
3. Degrees, honors, and awards received;
4. Grade level; and
5. Participation in officially recognized activities and sports.

School-sponsored/school-affiliated purposes are those events/activities that the School conducts and/or sponsors to support the educational mission of the School. Examples include, but are not limited to:

1. Extracurricular programs or events (e.g., school plays, concerts, athletic events, graduation ceremony);
2. Publications (e.g., newsletters, yearbook, etc.);
3. Honor roll and other student recognition lists.

The School shall not release directory information except for the purpose indicated above, namely:

- Disclosure relating to school-sponsored/school-affiliated purposes.

(4) The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the School to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA are:

Family Policy Compliance Office  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202

# School Parental Involvement

## Part I: General Expectations

**FACT Charter School** agrees to implement the following statutory requirements:

- The school will jointly develop with parents, distribute to parents of participating children, a School Parental Involvement Policy that the school and parents of participating children agree on.
- The school will notify parents about the School Parental Involvement Policy in an understandable and uniform format and, to the extent practicable, will distribute this policy to parents in a language the parents can understand.
- The school will make the School Parental Involvement Policy available to the local community.
- The school will periodically update the School Parental Involvement Policy to meet the changing needs of parents and the school
- The school will adopt the school's school-parent compact as a component of its School Parental Involvement Policy.
- The school agrees to be governed by the following statutory definition of parental involvement, and will carry out programs, activities and procedures in accordance with this definition:

*Parental involvement means the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring:*

- a. that parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning;*
- b. that parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school;*
- c. that parents are full partners in their child's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child;*
- d. the carrying out of other activities, such as those described in section 1118 of the ESEA (Elementary and Secondary Education Act).*

## Part II: Description of How the School Will Implement Required School Parental Involvement Policy Components

1. **FACT Charter School** will take the following actions to involve parents in the joint development and joint agreement of its School Parental Involvement Policy and its schoolwide plan, if applicable, in an organized, ongoing, and timely way under section 1118(b) of the ESEA.
2. The following will be disseminated to parents for review through website, newsletters, Home-School Association meetings, Back to School Night, parent packets, and advisory committees:
  - School Parental Involvement Policy;
  - School-Parent Compact;
  - Parent Notices as they apply to the Title I, Part A Non-Regulatory Guidance.
3. **FACT Charter School** will convene an annual meeting during the first quarter of the school year at a convenient time to inform parents of the following:
  - That their child's school participates in Title I,
  - About the requirements of Title I,
  - Of their rights to be involved,
  - About their school's participation in Title I.
4. **FACT Charter School** will provide timely information about Title I programs to parents of participating children in a timely manner thru:
  - Website



- Newsletters
  - “Back to School” Night
  - Parent Packets
  - Advisory Committees
5. **FACT Charter School** will provide parents of participating children a description and explanation of the curriculum in use at the school, the forms of academic assessment used to measure student progress, the proficiency levels students are expected to meet, and an opportunity for parents of participating children to provide suggestions as practicably possible through:
- Website
  - Newsletters
  - “Back to School” Night
  - Parent Packets
  - Advisory Committees
6. **FACT Charter School** will submit to the school board any parent comments if the school-wide plan under section (1114)(b)(2) is not satisfactory to parents of participating children. Submission of comments will be made to the school board president and parent will be notified by the school board for conference.

**Part III: Shared Responsibilities for High Student Academic Achievement:**

7. **FACT Charter School** will build the schools’ and parent’s capacity for strong parental involvement, in order to ensure effective involvement of parents and to support a partnership among the school involved, parents, and the community to improve student academic achievement, through the following activities specifically described below:
- Website
  - Newsletters
  - “Back to School” Night
  - Parent Packets
  - Advisory Committees
8. **FACT Charter School** will incorporate the school-parent compact as a component of its School Parental Involvement Policy and will be disseminated in the Parent Packets at the beginning of every school year.
9. **FACT Charter School** will provide assistance to parents of children served by the school in understanding topics such as the following:
- The State’s academic content standards;
  - The State’s student academic achievement standards;
  - The State and Local Academic Assessments including alternate assessments;
  - The requirement of Title I;
  - How to monitor their child’s progress, and
  - How to work with educators.
10. **FACT Charter School** will, to the extent feasible and appropriate, ensure that information related to the school and parent programs, meetings, and other activities, is sent to the parent of participating children in an understandable and uniform format, including alternative formats upon request, and to the extent practicable, in a language the parents can understand.