



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.aaunited.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.

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 7:30 am to 3:30 pm, Mondays through Fridays during the school year. Students are allowed to enter the building starting at 7:30 AM on school days. Dismissal from school is at 2:40 PM for students in Grades K-6. Dismissal from school is at 2:50 PM for students in Grades 7-8.

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.

When FACTS closes due to snow or hazardous weather conditions, 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. We will also post the information on the school's Facebook page.

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 7:30 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 absent from school, you must notify the school in writing in order for the absence to be excused. You can do this in **one of the following** three ways:

1. Fill out the online absence form. You must submit one for each child who is absent.
2. Email absencenote@factschool.org with your child's name, grade, date of absence and reason for absence. Please include a phone number where you can be reached.
3. Submit a hard copy absence note that includes your child's name, grade, date of absence and reason for absence when your child returns to school. There is a drop box in the lobby on the first floor.

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:

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Parents must notify FACTS of any changes to a student's regular after-school routine IN WRITING before 1:30.
Parents must pick up a student for early dismissal before 1:30.

Details on these and other guidelines are listed below.

Dropping Off Your Child

Parents are discouraged from dropping students off at school before 7:15 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:

- If you are driving, drop off your child on Shamokin Street, entering on the 11th Street side. Do NOT stop your car to drop off your student(s) on Callowhill Street. It is not safe and it obstructs traffic.
- If you are walking, please use the Callowhill entrance. Do not walk on Shamokin Street; it is not safe for pedestrians.

If you must park your car to come in with your child: There is a school loading zone on 11th 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. Do not park in the No Stopping Zone next to Shamokin.

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

Visiting Your Child / Your Child's Teacher: 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. 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 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 lines on the yard.
- 3) "Walkers" are students in grades 5-8 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 6. 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 follow the school's Code of Conduct while they are on the school bus.
- 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 follow the bus driver's safety rules at all times. The driver or the school may assign seats to address safety concerns.
- Video recording and photographing other students and the bus driver without consent is a violation of privacy rights.

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 School District of Philadelphia: 215-400-4350.

Parent Pick Up or Day Care Pick Up

Students whose parents or guardians will pick them up from school wait 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 3:00 pm. FACTS staff are not available to watch students after 3:00 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 3:00 pm. Children who are not picked up by 4 pm may be brought to the 9th 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. This written permission is kept on file in the main office and with the Middle School Coordinator. All 7th and 8th grade students who meet the school district of Philadelphia eligibility requirements will be issued a SEPTA card to travel to and from school.

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 after school 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.

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 1:30 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 1:30 PM. We cannot honor emergency requests to hold children off the bus that are received after 1:30 PM.

NO CELL PHONES AND PERSONAL SMART DEVICES

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, smart phones, smart watches, or smart glasses during the school day. Cell phones and other devices, such as smart watches and smart glasses, must be turned off and put away during school hours. If a student is seen with a cell phone during the school day, the phone will be taken and held in the Director of School Culture's office. They may pick up the phone at the end of the school day. If there are multiple violations, a parent may be required to come to the school to pick up the phone.

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.

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 responsible and trusted adult 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 free meals to our students, and we are a participant in the Federal National School Lunch Program. Breakfast and lunch are provided at no cost to all students.

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 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, Dewi Broadhurst 215-569-2600 x 1073 or email to dbroadhurst@factschool.org 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 THURSDAY

Every student has a Take-Home 2-pocket red folder. Every Thursday, 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 Friday 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 so we can make a regular practice of sending you news and information at a regular time each week.

DRESS CODE POLICY

FACTS has a standardized dress code policy. We feel our dress code is basic and affordable. We seek to avoid the distractions of peer pressure 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’.

FACTS school dress code consists of:

- Pants/Skirt: Navy Blue, Black or Khaki
- Shorts and skirts must be fingertip length or longer
- Shirts:
 - Navy Blue, White or Light Blue with a collar
 - FACTS affiliated t-shirts, such as FACTS logo shirts, 5K, FACTS clubs and ensemble t-shirts
- 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 or hats-may be worn inside the school.
- Red FACTS t-shirts are worn on Ritual Calendar Events (special school events) and field trips. Families and students will be notified when to wear their FACTS t-shirts.

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 to 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.

Meal Time

We seek to use this as a time to build a sense of community. 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.

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.

FACTS Class

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,

culture, 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. 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.

RITUAL CALENDAR / ANNUAL EVENTS

Commitment to School Rituals and Traditions

FACTS has built a regular cycle of school traditions and events. These rituals, repeated and shared activities, can serve to deepen students' sense of belonging to a shared experience and community. All staff are expected to participate in Ritual Calendar events.

Mid-Autumn Festival (September/October)

Mid-Autumn Festival is a holiday that has been celebrated for hundreds of years in many countries in Asia. In 1996, Asian Americans United created a homegrown version of this festival which has grown into a decades-long community tradition, taking over the main street of Chinatown for a day. In the school, we observe the holiday by teaching about MAF and encouraging students and staff to participate. On the weekend of the Mid-Autumn Festival, our staff choir performs, our staff and families attend, and we march together in the lantern parade.

Indigenous People's Day (October)

In 2021, the City of Philadelphia changed the holiday on the second Monday in October from Columbus Day to Indigenous People's Day. In 2022, FACTS changed the second Monday in October from a school day to a holiday honoring Indigenous People's Day.

Many Points of View Day (October)

Many Points of View Week is held during the fall. It is a week of 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 and community.

Honor Our Elders Day (November)

Honor Our Elders Day was inspired by the line in our school pledge, "Our families and our Elders know important things and we take time to learn from them." All of us have Elders who have touched our lives. These are people we wish to honor and we take a day to do just that. We particularly invite elders from the FACTS families to visit classrooms on this day.

Celebration of Peace (December)

Scheduled for the week before the winter break, this event highlights music and contemplation. 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:

- We close our school on Lunar New Year's Day (or the nearest week day) to allow for family observance.
- We use the Lunar New Year as a topic of inquiry in our classrooms.
- We host a school-wide Lunar New Year Celebration. We make a conscious attempt to recognize the many 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 the values in our school pledge and teach about folk arts and social change in deep and participatory ways. (And have fun together!)

We tell 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 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 and why the school was created and to see their own paths to standing up for things in which they believe.

Black Heritage Day (Spring)

Black Heritage is important to all of us. Our country is a richer place because of the contributions of all the people who make up our society. The gains of African Americans have benefited everyone – these victories have made a fairer society for all. On this day, we study history, but we also pay special attention to the role culture plays in sustaining people day in and day out. Black Heritage Day is a day of celebration, unity, reflection and thoughtful connections, as the FACTS community comes together and recognizes African American achievements, cultures, stories, and triumphs.

Folk Arts Showcase (May)

This May performance concert by FACTS students displays many of the skills learned by our students through folk arts ensembles with master artists from various cultural communities. Through performance and presentations we seek to help our students become "responsible culture makers."

Play Day (May/June)

This is our whole-school spring get-together. When weather permits, the whole school goes outside to a park. 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)

Move Up Day is 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 - to pause, reflect, celebrate, and anticipate. 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 people 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 st grade homeroom, & a 2 nd grade homeroom
Air:	a Kindergarten, a 1 st grade homeroom, & a 2 nd grade homeroom
Water:	a 3 rd grade homeroom, a 4 th grade homeroom, & a 5 th grade homeroom
Fire:	a 3 rd grade homeroom, a 4 th grade homeroom, & a 5 th grade homeroom
Moon:	a 6 th grade homeroom, a 7 th grade homeroom, & an 8 th grade homeroom
Sun:	a 6 th grade homeroom, a 7 th grade homeroom, & an 8 th grade homeroom
Stars:	6, 7, and 8 th grade students enrolled in the program for newcomer/beginning English Learners

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/phonics or math/science/social studies. For example, there are two first grade teachers; one teaches reading/writing/word study and the other teaches math/science/social studies. 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. ELD Teachers (English Development Program) and Special Education teachers work very closely with homeroom teachers for planning and delivery of instruction in order to meet diverse student needs.

SINGAPORE MATH (GRADES K-5)

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.

EUREKA MATH/GREAT MINDS (GRADES 6-8)

FACTS uses Eureka Math, also known as Great Minds, for grades 6-8. Great Minds build deep, lasting conceptual understanding rather than just memorizing. Great Minds approaches learning by building in the context of the real world and knowledge through consistent core skill development. Strong math foundation is developed by using conceptual knowledge that is layered, connected and applied to new concepts and learning.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (ELA)

FACTS ELA curriculum aligns with the Science of Reading by providing foundational reading skills through a structured scope and sequence that builds upon skills in a sequential manner. We use the Reading Horizons Discovery and Sound City curriculums for grades K-2.

Our reading comprehension curriculum is the Reading and Writing Project at Mossflower. The Reading and Writing Project emphasizes the interaction between readers and text, promoting discussion and questioning of

text through read-alouds and independent reading. Our reading curriculum is aligned with PA Core Standards. Students meet with teachers individually and in small groups to practice and strengthen targeted reading skills during daily independent reading blocks. They respond to reading through writing and discussion, including independent work, book clubs, and partner work.

Our students are expected to read every day, in class and at home. We encourage students to read books that are at their independent level. We ensure practice and opportunities to engage with more challenging text through read-aloud and shared texts, small group work, and test prep.

FACTS provides explicit vocabulary and grammar instruction in Grades 3-8 using the Patterns of Power, Words Their Way, and Making Words curriculums.

Our writing curriculum is also the Reading and Writing Project at Mossflower. Students study and write narrative, expository, and opinion pieces every year. They complete work using the Writing Process, and work independently, with peers, and with teacher conferences, to revise and edit their work. Grammar and spelling are reinforced in writing class. Our writing curriculum is aligned with PA Core standards. It is creative and celebratory. Parents often join classroom publishing parties.

SCIENCE

FACTS 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 follows the Pennsylvania Department of Education's (PDE) Science, Technology & Engineering, Environmental Literacy & Sustainability (STEELS) Standards.

Standards from the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE):

- Pennsylvania Integrated Standards for Science, Environment, Ecology, Technology and Engineering (Grades K-5)
- Pennsylvania Integrated Standards for Science, Environment, Ecology, Technology and Engineering (Grades 6-12)
- Pennsylvania Technology and Engineering Standards (Grades 6-12)

SOCIAL STUDIES

FACTS Social Studies curriculum integrates our own Folk Arts Standards with Pennsylvania Social Studies Academic Standards. 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 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. 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.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORT (MTSS)

FACTS' Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) 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 MTSS is the classroom, where the classroom teacher analyzes the strengths and learning needs of their students and adapts instruction and the environment to create optimal learning conditions. FACTS uses the MTSS process to address both academic and behavioral challenges.

The Student Support Team (School Counselor, School Social Worker, Directors of School Culture, Special Education Supervisor, Intervention Coordinator, and Principal) and grade level team consisting, but not limited to the school nurse(s), classroom teachers, special education and English Language Development (ELD) teachers have regular meetings to make recommendations for the provision of additional supports for students who are struggling with behavior.

MTSS-B is a tiered system of supports to address behavioral challenges. Tier 1 supports include best practices provided to all students as well as differentiation that is available to all students. Tier 2 supports are standard additional supports such as the creation of a Social/Emotional/Behavioral Support Plan designed for students not having success with Tier 1 alone. Tier 3 supports are highly individualized supports, usually intensified versions of Tier 2, for those students not having success with Tier 2. Parents are notified and invited to provide input if their child is selected for the MTSS 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
- 7th Grade Culminating Folk Arts Project
- 8th Grade Portfolio 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 families speak and read English,

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 rd grade: No more than 20 minutes per week 4 th grade: No more than 20 minutes per week 5 th 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 assignments and instructions must be accessible for students. Modifications must be made if students are unable to independently complete the homework assignment. Special attention must be considered to accessibility for ELD and Special Education students.

Homework for ELD and Special Education students must be modified to be consistent with the student's education plans. When necessary, ELD and Special Education staff design and deliver modified homework in consultation with classroom teachers. Modifications for other students (non-ELD 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. It's important to work with families and students to determine the best way of remediating missing homework and class assignments. Incentive programs may be considered. Missing recess, ensembles or special events cannot be used as a punishment or consequence. However, recess can be offered as a time for students to complete and make-up work.

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. All FACTS books must be returned to the school to maintain robust classroom libraries and book selections for students. 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-4 and letter grades in grades 5-8. 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 at 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

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 English Language Arts and math. Every Pennsylvania student in grades 4 and 8 is assessed in science. The State Board of Education approved "specific criteria for below basic, basic, proficient, and advanced levels."

<i>Pennsylvania's General Performance Level Descriptors</i>	
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.

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
- trust their teachers and respect teachers
- understand & respect the 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 problems they create. **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 they 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. Please see the Code of Conduct (in a separate document) for more details.

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.

The Board of Trustees is an independent governing body. Any board actions, decisions or inactions regarding a complaint is made independent of the school's executive director, administrators, teaching and non-teaching staff. Complaints submitted to the Board of Trustees will undergo a thorough, impartial, fair, and transparent review process.

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 or contact the FACTS Open Records Officer by calling the school office at (215) 569-2600.

Parents should read the following policies on our website:

- Code of Conduct (includes Anti-Bullying and Attendance Truancy Policy)
- FACTS Non-Discrimination Notification
- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
- Parent and Family Involvement Policy (LEA and School Level)
- Title I Parent-Student Compact

ESSA PARENT NOTIFICATION

As a Parent or Guardian of a student attending a school that is receiving Federal Title dollars, you have the right to know the professional qualifications of the teacher (s) and instructional paraprofessional (s) who instruct your child.

Federal law requires every Title I school to comply and to provide you with requested information in a timely manner. All schools have on file a listing of faculty members and their professional qualifications. At any time you may ask:

- Whether the teacher met state qualifications and certification requirements for the grade level and subject he/she is teaching
- Whether the teacher received an emergency or conditional certification through which state qualifications were waived, and
- What undergraduate and graduate degrees the teacher holds, including graduate certifications and additional degrees, and majors or areas of concentration.

You may also ask whether your child receives help from a paraprofessional. If your child receives this assistance, we can provide information about their qualifications.

The Every Students Succeeds Act (ESSA), which was signed into law in December 2015, includes additional right to know requests. At any time, you may request:

- Information on policies regarding student participation in assessments and procedures for opting out, and
- Information on required assessments that include:
 - Subject matter tested,
 - Purpose of the test,
 - Source of the requirement (if applicable),
 - Amount of time it takes students to complete the test, and
 - Time and format of disseminating results.

All of the above can be requested by contacting the main office.