



**“Private School Excellence, Home School Environment”**

P.O. Box 42876  
Philadelphia, PA 19101-2876  
215.747.5737 (Office)  
215.747.1185 (Fax)  
[www.ijobashule.org](http://www.ijobashule.org)

## **PARENT HANDBOOK**

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Parent Handbook

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## **INTRODUCTION**

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

## **PHILOSOPHY**

The Ijoba Shule was founded in 2005 on the basis of one primary objective: to create an academically superior and culturally affirmative institution that develops future leaders and thinkers for nation-maintenance and nation-management. Because the Ijoba Shule is a private, independent school that receives no funding from city, state, federal, or foundation sources, it is able to operate on a very selective admissions basis. Every student applicant is tested and observed, and must meet our high academic and developmental standards in order to be accepted for admission. All incoming students' previous report cards and school records are thoroughly reviewed prior to their admission to ensure that their behavioral and character development will also allow them to be successful in a program where conduct is as important as academic performance.

### **Mission and Philosophy**

The Ijoba Shule's mission is to teach students to be responsible handlers of power in service to the Divine, nation, community and family. We believe that a life is meaningless unless it is lived in service to something greater than oneself, hence one of our school mottos: "Not for oneself alone." There are four (4) major tenets that support our mission:

- (1) Character/moral development
- (2) A values-based, demanding, but nurturing academic environment
- (3) Development of a strong, positive Afrakan identity
- (4) Nation-building mindset

The core values of The Ijoba Shule are reflected in the Sankofa Code of Honor listed below (see Character Development, pp. 12)

The Shule works to help students recognize the proper balance and placement of the self in relation to the group (i.e. class, family, community etc.). We value the richness of our community and the opportunity and challenges it provides for the education of our students. Under the guidance and direction of our dedicated faculty and staff, Ijoba Shule students gain composure, dignity and presence that will guide them throughout their

lives.

We trace our roots to the existence of the nation's first segregated post-Bellum, one-room schoolhouses through to the growth of Independent Black Institutions (IBI) in the 1960's and 70's. We opened our doors for instruction in Fall 2005.

The Ijoba Shule is dedicated to educating talented students who come from families that motivate them and support their academic, creative, and character development. The school's mission is to educate our students to be responsible handlers of power. At the same time, every aspect of the program is designed to instill a strong sense of discipline, respect, and self-discipline in every student. One of the critical elements in this process is a commitment to ground the Ijoba Shule program in a cultural environment that enhances our students' sense of self-confidence and self-esteem by nurturing them with a celebration of their Afrakan heritage.

## **Sankofa Education**

In addition to our character-building and academic mission, The Ijoba Shule, is an outgrowth of Ile Iwa-Pele (House of Gentle Character) spiritual community, which is fully committed to the sentiments and practices of traditional Afrakan values that are integral to the life of the school and our community. The "traditional" influence manifests itself daily in the practice of libation, ancestral remembrance and respect and Pan-Afrakan confraternity to name a few. The Shule is "under the care" of Egbe Sankofa.

## **Meditations**

At the beginning of the day and again at the conclusion, our students are provided several minutes to perform their silent breathing meditation, in the tradition of their Kemetic (Egyptian) ancestors. This is a time for "not thinking," and instead quieting the mind and just being fully present in the moment.

## **Shule Saku (Shule Circle)**

Our students are taught to listen to each other, and to think and work through challenges as a unit. Shule Saku brings together the entire Lower School for collective decision-making and planning in a manner that strengthens the community.

## **Conflict Resolution**

Clear and high standards for behavior contribute to the well being of each individual and the community. The Ijoba Shule is committed to teaching nonviolence and creating a community in which all members seek peaceful resolution to conflicts

## **Community Service**

Inherent in the Shule's belief that life should be lived in service to something greater than oneself, community service is an integral feature of our curriculum. Service begins in the Lower Shule with various classroom responsibilities and participation in Shule-wide projects.

### **Prayer and Worship Time**

Students are provided time for personal prayer and worship consistent with the tradition that they observe at home. All of our students are encouraged to be spiritual-- to believe in something greater than them. We believe that by providing such scheduled time that mutual respect for each other's spirituality is enhanced, and each student's life is enriched.

## **GOVERNING BODIES**

The founding members of the Ijoba Shule, a Pennsylvania not-for-profit corporation, are working hard towards building an institution that will transcend the trials, tribulations, personalities, and pitfalls that will inevitably occur as the Shule grows and expands. We have sought to develop an administrative structure that is not dependent upon any one personality and one whose effectiveness will be constantly monitored and evaluated in light of the unique mission of the school.

The Council of Trustees (Board of Directors) of the Ijoba Shule, Inc. is the actual oversight body of the Ijoba Shule. It is comprised of people who have an existing insight into the overall political and spiritual philosophy upon which the school was created, and they have the responsibility for establishing policy and program objectives for the school. They also have the authority to determine the contour and content of the philosophical, cultural, historical, and spiritual aspects of the overall program. The Council has full and final authority over the decisions that affect the operations of the school and its program. An additional critical function of the Council is to review, ratify, and monitor the school's budget and actual receipt and expenditure of funds.

The Parents Council of the Ijoba Shule is specifically charged to work with the Council of Guardians, administrative staff, teachers, parent body, and any other existing entities that are devoted to the improvement and elevation of the Ijoba educational program. It does not have the authority to formulate policy or to unilaterally affect the day-to-day operations of the school, but its recommendations, advice, and input are a very important aspect of the overall decision-making process.

As its name suggests, the Parents Council will be comprised of parents- of both current and former Ijoba Shule students. The officers of this Council are elected annually by its membership. Parents are encouraged to participate in and become formal members of the Parents Council.

The day-to-day operations of The Ijoba Shule are carried out by the administrative staff. The program, in its entirety, is overseen by the Principal, who is the ultimate decision-

maker for the implementation of the policies that are mandated by the Council of Trustees. The two (2) Vice Principal assists the Principal in this implementation process. There will also be a director for the Ijoba Shule Early Learning Center (the program for three, four and five-year olds) Lower, Middle and Upper Shule's. Our Academic Officer is the person responsible for developing and monitoring the academic program at the Ijoba Shule, and is a central figure in establishing effective communications with all of our parents. The Administrative Officer is charged with the supervision of all of the front office functions.

## ***COUNCIL OF TRUSTEES***

The Ijoba Shule is under the care and direction of Ile Iwa-Pele (House of Gentle Character). A nine (9) member Council of Trustees manages the Shule. The members of the Council of Trustees are listed below, along with their affiliation with the Shule, profession, and their years on The Ijoba Shule's Council (as of the 2005-06 academic year).

### **OBA SEKOU OLAYINKA**

Years on Council: 3

Affiliation: Ile Iwa-Pele (ESKGA)

### **MOTILEWA BENNETT**

Years on Council: 3

Affiliation: Ile Iwa-Pele (ESKGA)

### **EKUNDAYO BRIAN JONES**

Years on Council: 3

Affiliation: Ile Iwa-Pele (ESKGA)

### **DR. ADRIENNE COOPER**

Years on Council: 1

Affiliation: Parent

## **ADMINISTRATION**

### **PARENTS COUNCIL**

One of the most important aspects of a successful educational institution is the degree to which there is effective communication, cooperation, and collaboration between the school and the family. All parents should understand that their child's education will be greatly affected by the degree to which parents:

- (1) Attend and participate in events and activities that have been established for them;
- (2) Make a concerted effort to keep informed about important school developments; and
- (3) Become a functioning part of the educational process by working with the Ijoba Shule teachers, administrators, supporters, and other parents.

One of the many ways that parents are expected to fulfill this commitment is through participating in the activities and programs of our Parents Council. The Council requires every family to work at or for the Ijoba Shule for a minimum of eighteen hours over the course of the school year. This is our Parent Partnership Program of the Parents Council, and it works out to less than two (2) hours per month per family. The program leaders approve work assignments and maintain records as to each family's participation towards their commitment of eighteen hours for the school year.

The purpose of this program is not to create another source of revenue, but to encourage our parent body to become an actual part of the collective effort to make our program a total success.

One of the mandatory fees that is charged to every household as a part of the Parent Partnership Program is the annual **Textbooks and Supplies Fee**. The amount of the fee is \$200.00, and it must be paid at the beginning of the school year or in equal installments during the course of the year. The Activity Fee represents an advance payment towards textbooks, workbooks, science materials, learning aids (e.g. math and Mdw Ntr (hieroglyphic) flash cards, art supplies (clay, paints, brushes) and other miscellaneous items for an improved educational experience for our children.

### **PROGRAM**

The Ijoba Shule views its program as a superior alternative to the numerous public,

charter, parochial, and private schools that exist in the Philadelphia area. We realize that there are many who are not familiar with our program because of our independent status and selective enrollment. Nonetheless, we are convinced that those who become familiar with our program will agree that we offer our children a superior learning experience in an atmosphere where they are made acutely aware of the fullness of their own ethnic and cultural history and identity.

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

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

Our staff and parents are the primary shapers of our young people, and their primary goal must be to educate and orient our children to be the kind of adults who will be ethical, responsible, productive and prosperous as they contribute to the development of their community. Though our students function in an ordered and structured setting, our staff radiates the kind of care and concern that ensures a warm and nurturing atmosphere.

The structure of the Ijoba Shule is based upon grouping all of the children by "age", according to their particular class assignment and maturity level. We feel that it is important that the children cultivate this sense of growing and elevating themselves, while at the same time benefiting from the companionship of those who are on the same developmental level as they are. There are four (4) of these "Age-Groups", and each has its own distinctive name and attributes.

The Ijoba Shule will consist of four (4) "shule's," or schools.

- Shule for Little Afrakan Peoples is our early childhood education program. It will serve students from pre-kindergarten through kindergarten. We will accept students based on maturity and whether or not they are potty-trained beginning as early as two –and-a-half (2.5) years-old.
- The Lower Shule is made up of our 1<sup>st</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grades.
- Our Middle Shule will serve our 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade students.
- And the Upper Shule will instruct our 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders.

One of the distinguishing features of the Middle and Upper School is that the students "change classes" once they are dismissed from "homeroom" in the morning.

The operational mandates of the Ijoba Shule necessitate that we carefully evaluate all of our students to ensure that they are truly benefiting from our overall program. It should be understood that we do everything possible to assist the student and the parent in this process, though there are some situations where despite everyone's best efforts, things don't work out.

In line with this policy, all students at the Ijoba Shule, without exception, are required to re-apply for admission each and every year that they are enrolled. This is done so that in those few instances where a child does not appear to be benefiting from our program, we can look at that particular situation, discuss it with the parents, and make the appropriate determination.

The decision to re-admit a student for the next school year is made by evaluating the individual progress of the child in five specific areas:

- (1) Academic Performance (their grades, their ability to keep up with the pace of their class work);
- (2) Character Development (classroom manners, proper in-school behavior, respect for others, healthy attitude);
- (3) Attendance Record (frequent instances of unexcused absences, chronic lateness);
- (4) Parent Participation (the parents' participation in planned events, programs, seminars and meetings, as well as their contributions to the Parent Partnership Program); and
- (5) Parent Financial Standing (record of paying tuition and other fees in a timely manner).

The most important of the above re-admission criteria are the student's record for academic performance and character development, however, the other criteria are considered situations where they figure either significantly above or below what is the accepted norm for the Ijoba Shule.

## ***FINANCIAL AID***

Unfortunately, at this time, Ijoba Shule does not currently offer any sources of financial aid for student tuition and fees. However, and all parents are encouraged to inquire about participation in our Capital Campaign, particularly the portion of the campaign that is concerned with developing scholarships. We encourage all parents and prospective parents to contribute to the effort to create an endowment for the development of scholarships and financial aid so that an Ijoba Shule education is accessible to financially challenged students and families.

## **ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT**

### **Curriculum**

Traditionally educated in a nurturing but challenging environment, Ijoba Shule students radiate confidence. The foundation for students' development is the Yoruba concept of Amaluwabi which weaves together year-by-year and subject-by-subject the components of an Ijoba Shule education. Studies in music, dance, art and various languages are offered in the lower grades and gain rigor and nuance as our students mature. Math and science move from facts to mentally challenging theories that require proof. We nurture values grade-by-grade.

### **Lower Shule**

Ijoba Shule's Lower Shule is a place of nurture, excitement and academic rigor. Students discover the joy of learning and begin to acquire the skills and discipline of the successful student.

Our curriculum is interdisciplinary, creative and challenging while remaining loving in nature. Educators instruct in the areas of reading, mathematics, social studies and science

Students see analyze, critique and recognize their own and each others' work so that they develop the skills of discernment, as well as collective and personal standards of assessment. By doing so, they develop the ability to evaluate and develop their own sense of demonstrated excellence. They also learn how to be citizens of a community via their classroom interactions, during meditations, through the role modeling of the educators and older students, and through involvement from the earliest grades in service to others.

Our Lower Shule students learn about the life of the city and begin to discover and utilize its vast resources. Visiting museums, arboretums, theatres and universities helps our students make connections between their classroom learning and the outside world.

### **Middle Shule**

We will be expanding to Middle Shule grade 6 in 2008-09. Contact us for details.

### **Upper Shule**

We will be expanding to Upper Shule grade 9 in 2011-12. Contact us for details.

### **After Shule Program- Lower Shule (Pre-K Through 5th Grade)**

In the not to distant future, Lower Shule families will have the option of enrolling our After Shule Program, which offers further enrichment and experiences for students and

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convenience for parents. The program will be staffed by professional and highly skilled instructors and will provide choices that include storytelling, art and “cooking” classes, instrumental and music lessons (for an additional fee), a chorus, dance and a quiet homework room. Families will find the program highly flexible; children may attend as many days each week as they choose. We plan to offer an early morning before-Shule drop-off option and a vacation care program when Shule is closed. Stay tuned.

### **Co-Curricular Activities- Middle Shule (6th through 8th grades)**

Scheduled to begin in the 2008-09 academic year, our co-curricular activities will be an integral part of each middle Shule students’ educational experience. It may include the Shule newspaper, theatre group, student government, peer tutoring, movie night and more. In addition, every Middle Shule student will be required to participate in at least one season of after-school interscholastic athletics per year.

#### **Omodebinrin (Girls) Sports**

Fall: cross-country, soccer

Winter: basketball

Spring: track, softball

#### **Omodekunrin (Boys) Sports**

Fall: cross-country Winter: basketball

Spring: track, baseball

#### **Co-ed Sports**

Winter: Swimming

Spring: Tennis

### **Summer Academic, Enrichment & Vo-Tech Programs**

Beginning in the summer of 2008, Ijoba Shule will offer three and six week academic and enrichment programs for students entering grade six. Each subsequent summer we will add a grade until the summer of 2014, when we accept students entering grades six through twelve.

**Enrichment areas:** Yoruba, UrbanSketch, photography, graphic design, documentary

filmmaking, Afrakan American dance, drumming

**Academic subjects:** Yoruba, mathematics, writing and humanities.

**Vo-Tech skills offered:** Electrical, roofing, masonry, general contracting, plumbing, painting, construction, and carpentry

## **Shule Policies And Guidelines**

The Ijoba Shule is a Sankofa institution, thus there is an emphasis on our students exhibiting pride via proper conduct, both personally and collectively, showing respect for the Creator by respecting all forms of life, living simply, and exhibiting self-discipline.

The Ijoba Shule teaches all of the universally mandated academic subjects, but we place special emphasis in the areas of language arts, mathematics, science, and history/social studies because we believe that mastery of these areas will help the child in all of the other academic endeavors. We make extensive use of trips, workshops, and outdoor activities for all of the children to enrich and make more practical that which they get from the varied elements of classroom instruction.

In addition to the above, we have classes that are unique to the Ijoba Shule in which we teach the children about their identity, their history, and their relationship to the world of which they are a part. Classes such as Mdw Ntr (Kemetite hieroglyphics), Yoga and Character Development These classes are an essential part of our curriculum. It is during this time that we instill a sense of pride in the children about who they are, what they are doing, and the fact that they are doing it at the Ijoba Shule.

Our language curriculum consists of extensive instruction in varied Afrakan (i.e. Yoruba, Kiswahili, Zulu) and non-Afrakan languages (Spanish, French and Portuguese) for all of our students, and they are expected to “major” in a language by the time they reach 5<sup>th</sup> grade.

Our assessment system is one tool by which we measure the academic and behavioral achievements of our students. It has been designed to motivate our students to work towards their own individual levels of excellence in their academic studies and character development. We do not, under any circumstances, convey to our children at this young age any sense of competitiveness or pressure to get "high marks". In fact our emphasis in all grades is to encourage and facilitate group activities, collective (team) work and cooperation. What we do is to make them aware of their potential to do outstanding work collectively, and we consistently praise them for the success they achieve when they work as a group.

All Ijoba Shule students are evaluated each Student Assessment period, or trimester as to

both academic development and character development. All assessments are "cumulative", which means that any grade that is recorded on the report card (including the final grade) is a result of everything that the child has done up to that point, and not just what has been done for that particular grading period.

At Ijoba Shule we assess each student based on their inputs (process), not necessarily the outputs (grades). For example, homework will factor in to the students' assessment not based only on the percentage correct or incorrect, but rather on the effort to complete homework, and the consistency of turning in quality homework. Quality homework is neat, methodological and easily understandable. In the Lower school grades we are more concerned with the students' thinking process than we are with whether or not they have the "correct" answer. The questions that our instructors are concerned with is: What/How are you thinking? We are also concerned that our students become self-evaluating and self-gratified with the quality of their work and learning. When our students internalize these values, then they are well on their way to becoming creatively self-directed, the highest level of achievement.

Ijoba Shule assessments are not "computed" on the basis of a specific percentage for class work, tests, homework, quizzes, reports, and special projects in the traditional way. At Ijoba Shule "Areas of Evaluation" are identified by each instructor and evaluated on the following scale:

- 4- Excellent
- 3- Good
- 2- Satisfactory
- 1- Poor

In addition, and most importantly each instructor write an evaluation for each of their student relative to the overall quality of effort, work and achievement. We believe these comments and the subsequent conference are far more valuable and accurate in evaluating students' academic development for parents, administrators and instructors.

The method that we use to assess academic development is unique and we believe much more comprehensive than the standards for most educational institutions. We are unique in our approach We feel that our way is consistent with the higher expectations for Ijoba Shule students, and will better prepare our students for the highly competitive world they will be entering upon graduation.

Parents should be aware that students who exhibit frustration in acquiring academic skills, at their maturity level, will be encouraged to take classes during the summer months in their area(s) of weakness. Prior to that, parents will be asked to participate in a conference to discuss the future instructional strategies to be used with their child.

Assessment for character development is on going. It is not isolated in Character Development class, but rather it is woven throughout the entire curriculum, in every subject and reinforced by each instructor. Our instructors are taught the traits of good

character as defined by Sankofa culture and they are required to exemplify these in their personal and professional lives. They are further taught how to recognize and reinforce the development of good character in students during our Staff Development workshops throughout the year.

Student Assessments are prepared and recorded on them at the end of each trimester (in November, March, and June). Parents are expected to keep up with their child's progress by communicating, formally and informally, with their child's instructor, and by attending the three (3) Parent/Teacher Conferences in November, March, and June.

## **CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT**

One of the core tenets of the Ijoba Shule program, along with academic excellence, development of strong Afrakan identity and a nationalist mind-set, is character development.

The Character Development Curriculum for the Lower Shule of The Ijoba Shule is designed to introduce:

1. The concept of Ma'at
2. Sankofa Movement concepts of ReAfrakanization, Family development and Nation-building
3. The foundational nine (9) principles of the Sankofa Code of Honor,
4. Basic yoga meditation principles and
5. Elementary strategic thinking via games and game theory as their approach to life.

Armed with these concepts and principles, and the ability to manipulate and implement them, our students will begin the journey to becoming Amaluwabi.

The foundation of Sankofa society and life is the Kemetic (Egyptian) principle of Ma'at. The Kemetyu believed that the universe is created through Ma'at, a term which means truth, justice, order, righteousness, harmony, balance reciprocity, rightness, levelness, evenness, katha wa katha (kwk) [kwk, Kiswahili for, "and so on," or "et cetera"]. Ma'at is a divine concept is established as the fundamental concept, power and practice for the correct organization, maintenance and development of human society. As such, Ma'at is the foundation of both the natural and social order. Its core concept is rightness in nature and righteousness in human society. [Karenga, 1984]

### **Sankofa Code Of Honor**

- (1) Act honorably (Towotowo). Honor is not negotiable. It is an all-encompassing requirement of being Sankofa. A true Sankofa has only one judge of honor, and this is her/himself. Decisions you make and how these decisions are

carried out are a reflection of who you truly are. You cannot hide from yourself.

- (2) Act with courage and a warrior's spirit (Ilaya). When you know what needs to be done, do it. Rise up above the masses of people who are afraid to act. Hiding like a turtle in a shell is not living at all. A Sankofa must possess heroic courage (fearlessness). It is absolutely risky. It is dangerous. It is living life completely, fully, and wonderfully. Fearlessness is not blind. It is intelligent and strong.
- (3) Be loyal and dutiful (Seegbekele ati Eto). Without loyalty there is no trust. For the Sankofa, having done some "thing" or said some "thing" you know you own that "thing." You are responsible for it, and all the consequences that follow. A Sankofa is immensely loyal to those in her/his care. To those you are responsible for remain fiercely true.
- (4) Act with rectitude and complete sincerity (Iwa-ododo). Always do the right thing. When a Sankofa has said they will perform some act, it is as good as done. Nothing can stop you from completing what you have said you will do. You do not have to "promise." Speaking and doing are the same action.
- (5) Be compassionate (Aanu). To be a leader, one must care about others. Through intense training the Sankofa becomes fearless and strong. Sankofa are not as other people. You develop a power that must be used for the good of all. You have compassion. You help out your fellow human beings at every opportunity. If an opportunity does not arise, you will go out of the way to find one.
- (6) Be honest and just (Olooto). Without honesty, there is no credibility. Be acutely honest throughout your dealings with all people. Believe in justice, not from other people, but from yourself. To the true Sankofa, there are no shades of gray in the question of honesty and justice. There is only right and wrong.
- (7) Be polite and courteous (Amaluwabi). It shows respect and makes getting along with everyone much easier. Sankofa have no reason to be cruel. You do not need to prove your strength. A Sankofa is courteous, even to your enemies. Without this outward show of respect, you are nothing more than an animal. A Sankofa is not only respected for your strength in struggle, but also for how you deal with other human beings. The true strength of a Sankofa becomes apparent during difficult times.
- (8) Act under self-control (Isera). To lead and direct others and situations, you must control yourself.
- (9) Appreciate the arts (Ona-moyi). Art is the doorway to comprehending and appreciating life.

Developing character is a lifelong process. Character is defined as a combination of qualities and traits that makes a person, group or thing unique from another. Our goal, again, is to teach the students that they are responsible for their characters- hence their decisions. The instructor must get the students to learn and accept that their daily choices determine who they are, then the mission has been accomplished.

If a child's behavior is disruptive, disrespectful, or dysfunctional s/he will be **DISMISSED** post haste. We cannot, will not and do not tolerate such behavior. For this reason, offenses such as fighting, cheating, or stealing will result in automatic and immediate Parent, Principal and Instructor(s) conference.

## ***ATTENDANCE STANDARDS***

The Ijoba Shule believes that a child's attendance is a critical factor in their overall success and the success of our program. We strictly monitor your child's attendance, and at the first sign of potential problems with attendance or lateness, parents are notified and required to meet with the Ijoba Shule staff before it develops into major crisis.

All of our students are expected to be at school, every day, at or before 8:00 a.m. The day begins with Shule Saku (School Circle) where the students meditate, pray, sing our national (Lift Ev'ry Voice And Sing) and Pan-Afrakan (Nkosi Sikeleli Afrika) anthems, as well as recite our school recitations. Classroom instruction commences promptly at 8:15 a.m., and it is obvious that the children cannot be prepared to start class at that time if they do not arrive at school on time. Children who arrive at Ijoba Shule after 8:15 a.m. are to report to their classroom immediately and will be and marked "tardy."

We realize that there will be situations where sickness, family emergencies, and the like will prevent a child from being present and/or on time. We will be as understanding and cooperative with family's as possible about these situations.

## ***SPECIAL EVENTS***

Our special events include the following:

- Parents Day (September)
- Grand Parents Day (October)
- Winter Solstice Village Presentation (December)
- Kwanzaa Karamu (December)
- Olude Ibeji Children's Festival (March)
- CIBI Academic Expo
- BannaKa/Latimer Engineering and Science Fair (May)
- Spring Village Presentation (May)

- Apa Oranmiyan Character Development Program (June)
- Eyin Moremi Character Development Program (June)

All presentations, celebrations and special events are community happenings and, as such, includes all of the Ijoba Shule staff, parents, family's, students, and supporters, and renews the Ijoba Shule extended family's connection to its spiritual and cultural legacy. The Celebration also acknowledges the change of the seasons, the occurrence of significant events such as birthdays, and our African ancestors.

Engineering, science and mathematics are such an important part of the Ijoba Shule academic experience that we have our own Engineering & Science Fair. Our students participate by way of classroom group projects. Each year, "judges" from the scientific and technical community evaluate and rate the projects, and designate those that are truly outstanding in service to the community and ecologically informed.

The school year at Ijoba Shule culminates with our Character Development Presentation. This ceremony marks the passage of students moving from one age-set (i.e. from Lower to Middle Shule) to the next and it also recognizes the graduates who are moving to the next level of social and academic achievement. During this ceremonious occasion, the students are honored for achievements in academic and character development and give a presentation of what they have learned during the school year to their community. The student body and staff all wear white for the Passage Ceremony. The students also wear their gender-specific iborun (a sash) and are permitted to add a new "credential," symbolizing their achievement and the responsibilities the community can expect them to fulfill.

Our Character Development Presentation is unique in that the entire student body takes part in the ceremony.

## ***GREETINGS***

The Ijoba Shule teaches all of its students a standard way of addressing and greeting adults and each other while at school. Female adults are addressed as "Iya", and male adults are addressed as "Baba". Boys are called "Ogbeni" (followed by their first name), whereas girls are referred to as "Omidan" followed by their first name. In addition, upon meeting each other the Ijoba "family" greets each other with the appropriate greeting in Yoruba. The appropriate greeting is based upon the prevailing conditions when meetings (e.g. whether its is morning, afternoon or night kwk, Kiswahili for "and so on.").

We do this as a part of their social instruction in establishing common cultural standards, and to impress upon the children the importance of personal contact and good manners. We expect the Sankofa families to reinforce this at home. It is not necessary that the children of other traditions carry out these practices at home, but we certainly approve of them doing so if the parents choose to reinforce these basic notions of etiquette. We welcome any questions about the content or purpose of our greetings or titles.

## ***SCHOOL DRESS / UNIFORM***

The Ijoba Shule requires that each student wear one of the three (3) approved uniform or standard outfit, at all times, while at school. We do this for a number of reasons. First, the wearing of a uniform by everyone tends to foster a sense of commonality and unity. Second, it eliminates the problem of overdressing, under-dressing, or large gaps in the style of what the children wear to school. Third, it has been our experience that after the initial outlay of money, it is much simpler and more economical for the parents.

Our standard dress for the boys is a fila (hat), ewu (shirt) and sokoto (trousers). Our girls' dress uniform includes: gele (head wrap), buba (blouse) and lapa (wrap dress). Athletic shoes are not acceptable as a part of the standard dress for boys or girls, and students are not allowed to wear "sneakers" in school. They may wear them only during the time they are scheduled for gym class.

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

## ***LUNCH***

The Ijoba Shule does not operate its own lunch program, therefore, parents are to send their child's lunch to school with them in the morning. There are some food items that we strongly discourage. With the natural tendency that children have to share and exchange portions of their lunch, we have received consistent complaints from parents whose children end up with food that they would prefer that they not eat. Therefore, we ask that you do not send any of the following items in your child's lunch: (1) any pork products, (2) any soda, "Hugs" or soft drinks, and (3) candy of any kind.

## ***TRANSPORTATION***

As parents should be aware, the Ijoba Shule does not assume any direct responsibility for student transportation.

## ***CALENDAR***

The Ijoba Shule will be open on Thursday, August 31, 2006 for all students. The last day of school is on Friday, June 8, 2007.

Our ten-month school year is divided into three trimesters that are approximately twelve weeks in duration. The Ijoba Shule does not follow the Philadelphia public school calendar exactly, and parents are advised to carefully review our official calendar to determine exactly which days that the school is closed and the dates of all of our special events.

Because of the diverse nature of our parent body in the way of religious orientation, cultural affinity, or political philosophy, all parents should be aware that the Ijoba Shule does NOT celebrate Columbus Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, or Easter in our classrooms, school activities, or by way of displays. However, The Ijoba Shule is closed for almost all of the so-called “national holidays” (with the exception of Columbus Day) as a practical matter because of parents’ work schedules.

As has been stated, our school day begins promptly at 8:00 a.m. We conclude our school day at 4:00 p.m., and parents must come to pick up their children at that time. Parents who need to pick their children up from school before 3:00 p.m. should provide the school with advance notice in order to minimize any classroom disruption.

## **CONCLUSION**

Our philosophy is simple: If Afrakan people are to become an empowered, competitive group then our behavior has to change. This means that the education of our children must be concerned with them being socialized to responsibly wield power in the best interests of themselves, and their community. Dr. Amos N. Wilson said: “The major function of education is to help secure the survival of a people.” Therefore, the education and socialization practices of Ijoba Shule students will prepare them to serve their community in day-to-day operations, collective survival, interpersonal relations and basic “quality of life” issues.

The Ijoba Shule also maintains a very comprehensive website. Please visit and/or refer all interested parties to [www.ijobashule.org](http://www.ijobashule.org).

For more information please contact us at:

The Ijoba Shule  
P.O. Box 42876  
Philadelphia, PA 19101-2876

**Office:** 215-747-5737

**Fax:** 215-747-1185