

***THREE-YEAR TERM REVISIT
COMMITTEE REPORT***

**FAME Public Charter School
39899 Balentine Drive Suite 335
Newark, CA 94560**

**Date of Original Visit: April 3-5, 2006
On Site Revisit: March 9-10, 2009**

Midterm Visiting Committee:

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I. Introduction

General Comments about the School

FAME is operated by Bay Area School for Independent Study, Inc, a 501C3 not for profit public benefit corporation. Bay Area School for Independent Study, Inc., also commonly known as BASIS, Inc., is managed by a board of four members. Since the initial self-study, only one member of the board has changed. A fifth seat, reserved for an Alameda County Office of Education representative, continues to be vacant. FAME is chartered to serve the students of Alameda County and the six contiguous counties that surround it: Contra Costa, Stanislaus, San Francisco, San Mateo, San Joaquin and Santa Clara. FAME consists of three programs, two are site based and one is independent study (IS). High school students are served by the site-based program in Fremont and by the IS program.

The site-based and IS programs operate independently of each other with occasional collaboration by administration on specific topics. The school director and director of finance develop the school budget. Each site administrative team makes recommendations for individual program improvements to the school director who then makes decisions about allocation of resources.

In 2006, FAME met the Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) requirement meeting 20 of its 20 AYP criteria. It met 14 of its 20 criteria in 2007 and in 2008, the school met 18 of its 18 AYP criteria. The school's Academic Performance Index (API) has fluctuated over the past three years. In 2006, the school exceeded its API growth target with a 721, fell to 704 in 2007, and rose to 731 in 2008.

FAME Independent Study

FAME IS is the non-classroom component of FAME. The Dublin location has offices with an extensive lending library. It also serves as a place for teachers to meet with their families, and houses the Special Education program. Independent Study high school numbers have increased from 116 students in 2005-06 to a current enrollment of 219 students.

FAME IS also operates the Brentwood Learning Center, new since the full report, where classes and workshops are offered for students.

In the IS program, credentialed teachers assign a body of work to be completed during the duration of the school year that is comparable to (but not necessarily identical) to that which would be covered in a regular classroom. Teachers help students and parents choose curriculum that is suitable for the student's learning objectives, style, and ability. This may include textbooks, community college courses, tutoring, and a variety of distance online or text-based learning courses. Course descriptions outline curriculum options.

FAME Fremont

The Fremont program was established during the same year as the initial WASC accreditation visit. The high school program started with 9th and 10th grade students and has added a grade per year. Currently there are 36 9th grade students, 20 10th grade, 15 11th grade and 15 12th grade students enrolled in the program. Students attend Monday through Thursday, 8:30-3:45 and Friday 8:30-12:45.

The academic program is comprehensive college preparatory. The UC/CSU course sequence is implemented and teachers use the same a-g course descriptions as the IS program. Students entering after the 9th grade must have the appropriate credits that enable them to “fit” into the program course sequence.

Students attending the program trade a large comprehensive high school experience for a smaller, personalized program. Students, teachers and staff have ample opportunities for interaction and to build a cohesive community atmosphere. Teachers are able to differentiate instruction based on student learning needs and cross collaborate with other teachers to insure that instructional needs of each student are being met. The population of the program is diverse and requires students and staff alike to promote tolerance and understanding of differences. Since the high school program is housed with the elementary grades, high school students have the opportunity and are encouraged to model good citizenship and appropriate behavior. Each student wears a board adopted school uniform. Fremont has an active PTO and has had a student council for the past three years.

FAME San Leandro

FAME continues to operate the San Leandro site-based program, but it now only houses K-8 students.

Significant Changes

- Initially San Leandro included a 9-12 independent study learning center. The original intention was that the high school program at San Leandro would remain independent study (as per the original charter) but reduce the number of learning center classes offered. Due to the academic needs of the students, a reduction in the number of classes was contraindicated. What became clear was that the students attending San Leandro and their parents needed and desired a comprehensive high school program. The site was not large enough to accommodate that type of program and it was not feasible to expand in the current location. Additionally, with the opening of the Fremont program there was now the opportunity to offer those students a full day traditional program. The decision was made to convert the San Leandro site to contain an elementary-middle school program only. The high school students were provided with the opportunity to enroll in the Fremont high school program or remain in independent study utilizing other curriculums and programs to complete their studies. To encourage and enable students to enroll in the Fremont program, FAME provides BART tickets to the commuting students. Currently eight students receive BART tickets.

Approximately 80% of the students at San Leandro either transferred to Fremont or continued in the independent study program though not all of them are still currently enrolled. A substantive change visit to the Fremont site was made on March 20, 2008, and it was determined that the change enhanced the school's ability to deliver education to its students. Twelfth grade students were added to the site this school year.

- This year, at Fremont, a guidance counselor was hired to work closely with the high school students on high school and post high school planning. Due to a variety of circumstances, a full range of services (four-year plans, counseling those at risk of not passing CAHSEE, college planning for 9th through 11th grade) has not been implemented.
- An IS learning center was opened in Brentwood in 2006/07. On-site classes and workshops are being offered there to both elementary and high school students.
- To provide students with athletic opportunities, FAME is now a member of BASCAL, a charter schools' athletic program.
- Historically, FAME has used PowerSchool as its main student information system, especially for interfacing with the Alameda County Office of Education, the authorizing agency for FAME. The IS program has been using SchoolPathways for the past three years and has operated the two systems simultaneously. There seems to be a need to maintain both of these systems because of the diversity of the programs being administered by FAME. This year, a data coordinator position was created. That person is responsible for insuring that the data systems are accurately maintained and is responsible for submitting state reports such as CBEDs and SSID.
- The school is participating in the BP Cohort project through FCMAT to gear up for the new CALPADS reporting system that will take effect next school year. FAME has also recently purchased the Edusoft test data management system. This is the first year the school has worked with this system. Edusoft will enable the school to more readily disaggregate state test data, create benchmark assessments, and provide a tool for increased data driven decision making. In addition, during the 2006/07 school-year FAME contracted with a new vendor, OPS, for a program to manage purchasing. The system ties into SIS and enables teachers to more efficiently order and track student curriculum purchases. Administrative staff also has increased oversight of materials purchases and can generate comprehensive reports on curriculum use and expenditures.

Description of Follow-up Process

The midterm progress report was prepared primarily by the IS Assistant Program Administrator who also served in the capacity of the Self-Study Coordinator for the initial report. Input from other stakeholders came from the results of surveys and from the

IS leadership team. The IS program has established a leadership team that consists of the program administrators, the IS curriculum and instruction coordinator, the academic counselor (part-time position), and two lead teachers (math and ELA). The team meets at least once a month to plan staff development and implement programs that fulfill the school's single plan and WASC action items. The site leadership also meets regularly to address areas of concern and needed improvements in those programs. The Action Plan has been reviewed and updated annually for the past three years.

As the initial WASC visit did not pertain to the Fremont site and they had not participated in that self-study, almost all of the work on the action items was done by the IS leadership team. Fremont has been in "start-up" mode for the past three years and has had significant turnover in the teaching and leadership staff. A new principal (the third principal) who took over duties in 2007/08 has and continues to stabilize the program at this site.

FAME's board and the Fremont site administration have been kept informed of the progress made toward the goals established in the Action Plan.

At the end of each school-year, a survey is sent to every family enrolled in the IS program. In addition, in fall of the 2008/09 school year, high school families were surveyed to gather community data and input more specific to high school needs. The school received 68 responses representing 77 students (35% of 219 total IS students) and 24 responses representing 25 students (29% of the Fremont high school students).

Analysis of survey results for Independent Study

The number one reason parents enroll their high school student in the IS program is because they want an academic program tailored to their child's learning needs; the second highest reason is that their students were failing academically at their local school and at-risk of dropping out. Over half of the respondents had attended a local public school prior to enrollment in FAME and 78% live in a two parent household. The responses were evenly split between having and not having experience in a home-study program. Eighty-seven percent own a computer with internet access. Eighty-four percent of the respondents indicated strong agreement when answering the statement: *I am satisfied with the quality of education my student is receiving at FAME IS*, another 7% somewhat agreed with the statement. In response to the statement, *FAME has high academic standards*, 81% strongly agreed or somewhat agreed.

Analysis of survey results for Fremont

Fremont enrollment has more continuity than the IS program; the majority of students in that program have matriculated from lower grades. Parents indicated via the survey that the number one reason for enrolling their children in the Fremont program was that the school schedule, calendar, and holidays support their family's culture, the number two reason was for Arabic language instruction and the desire for a small program was important also. The students had either attended their local public schools (17) or private schools (7) prior to enrollment in FAME and 92% live in two parent households. Thirty-one percent of respondents indicated strong agreement with the statement: *I am satisfied*

with the quality of education my student is receiving at FAME (Fremont), another 23% somewhat agreed with this statement. In response to the statement, FAME has high academic standards: 63% somewhat agreed or strongly agreed.

II. Follow-up Process: Progress on Schoolwide Action Plan

The school's Action Plan addressed the four critical areas of follow-up left by the visiting committee. Progress has occurred in each area as shown in the summaries given below.

Growth Need #1: Student Achievement. Students will demonstrate improved achievement in the areas of reading, writing, and math. Achievement will be measured first at the individual level and, secondly, at the school-wide level in alignment with our emphasis on personalized learning plans. A variety of assessments will be used to measure student progress. (Addresses Critical Area for Follow-up #1)

Overall, API scores for the three years since the initial full study have indicated growth. Students in the IS program who have scored at the Below and Far Below Basic levels are administered Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) MAP assessments (reading, math, language usage) which are used as diagnostic tools to target student instructional level needs, especially for those who have not passed CAHSEE and for Special Education students. This has allowed IS teachers to assist students and families in curriculum selection including supplemental materials which align to specific student needs. Both IS and Fremont make use of released CAHSEE and CST questions in helping students prepare for testing. Students in the Fremont site-based program are offered Algebra 1 or Geometry as their entry level freshman classes. In 2005/06, some site-based students were enrolled in a ninth grade Pre-Algebra course. Tutorial opportunities are offered to IS students through approved vendor services for all subject matter areas, as determined by the student, parent and IS teacher. On-site tutoring is offered at Fremont at lunch time by individual teachers and after school. ELD instruction is offered to 17 identified high school students on the Fremont campus through contracted services. Rubrics for grading key language arts assignments have been developed for the IS program. Two high school teachers at the Fremont site are a part of a BTSA program offered through a local school district.

A formalized structure for common assessment or benchmarks is needed in both the IS program and the site-based Fremont program.

Growth Need #2: Teacher and Student Support Services. Improve services to teachers, students, and parents in order to ensure that adequate supports are in place that enable the implementation of the school's mission and vision in service to each individual student's personalized learning plan. (Addresses Critical Area for Follow-up #2)

In general, improvements have been made in the last three years in the areas of student and teacher support. It is important to note, however, that discrepancies do exist in the extent of growth realized by the two programs.

FAME IS staff have implemented a variety of support elements for both students and teachers since the last WASC visit. Changes include additional resources for ELA and mathematics, including resource support in the form of curricular "lead teachers,"

continued work on courses of study and rubrics for student evaluation, an RtI approach to supporting student intervention, and an SST process intended to address the needs of students who lack key skills. Teachers are provided with a variety of staff development opportunities and fledgling professional learning communities exist, providing teachers with both peer support and avenues to influence their continued growth as educators and facilitators of student learning. Teachers serve as the main conduit for core and support services for students, and both formal and informal communication systems exist to provide teachers with the information that they need from administration and the support staff.

The Fremont site teacher and student support structures seem to be in a developmental stage. With the exception of the math and Arabic/Foreign Language instructors, all other teachers are departments of one. As single person departments, there are no site-based opportunities to collaborate with teachers in a similar content area, nor are there clear avenues to obtain professional development in their content areas. Students expressed a feeling of commitment from their teachers and cited both after school and lunch time tutorials available to them. Classroom observations confirmed a culture of respect and cultural acceptance for all students.

Since there are no site-based opportunities for single person department teachers to collaborate with teachers in a similar content area, content specific professional development opportunities are needed.

Growth Need #3: Communication. Improve communication among administration, staff, student, parents, and community in order to better serve the needs of students and families and ensure stakeholders are informed of all relevant information pertaining to the school. (Addresses Critical Area for Follow-up #3)

Since the self-study, FAME has worked to disseminate critical, program-wide information to all stakeholders and has improved communication between parents and teachers regarding each individual student's progress and goals.

The IS program has effectively increased the use of electronic mail between monthly face-to-face meetings with individual parents, while the Fremont site is focusing on improving communication at the staff level. Email and flyers are also used to forward board meeting agendas to teachers and on to parents. Both IS and Fremont have recently moved from large group staff meetings to smaller professional learning communities (IS) or grade level meetings (site) to better facilitate communication. Both groups are served by the redesigned FAME website which provides information about the programs and contains extensive high school guidance information. However, the website link for board minutes and agendas is under construction.

Revisions to the FAME website, supporting board/community communication, need to be current and formalized.

Growth Need #4: Stakeholder Involvement. Improve stakeholder involvement in school processes to ensure that all groups have adequate access and participation in planning and development process. (Addresses Critical Area for Follow-up #4)

Stakeholder involvement in the program in terms of communication and organized, institutionalized opportunities for staff and parents to participate in the school planning process continue to be areas of critical need, especially for the Fremont high school staff. Collaboration in developing the IS program and resources is well underway, especially in the area of English standards and expectations. Independent Study documents have been updated to clarify parental roles and responsibilities and program requirements.

Communication protocols need to be established for providing current information (state of the school, FAME's financial health, school site issues) amongst principal/teacher, board/parents/community, principal/community and teacher/parents.

Substantive Change:

In regard to substantive change at the Fremont site, the addition of a twelfth grade class and the addition of a counselor were noted. The twelfth grade students were looking forward to their graduation and many shared professional level aspirations for their life after high school. Students interviewed shared a belief that FAME had prepared them for additional study. A counselor was added to the Fremont staff and he is held in high regard by staff and students alike; however, the counselor was not interviewed by the visiting team due to his absence related to an extended illness. Some parents did share a concern that the majority of counseling services had been focused on the senior class to the detriment of 9th through 11th grade students.

Additional Recommendations

The committee recommends the development of a vehicle for sharing the discretionary budgetary support available to the Fremont site teachers for professional development. Also recommended is a commitment by administration to address teacher queries, concerns and requests in a timely manner.