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To the FAME Community, our Dedicated Parents and other FAME Supporters:

Many of you have undoubtedly read the New York Times article from this past Sunday that grossly mischaracterizes our school's mission, our academic success and financial practices of the school. I wanted to reach out to all of you to share with you FAME's deep disappointment in the unprofessional reporting exhibited in the New York Times article.

The New York Times displays an astonishing level of cultural insensitivity by asserting that because FAME caters to immigrant families from the Middle East, that we are a "comfort zone for Muslim students." While we intend to make our schools comfortable for kids because learning should be enjoyable, this patronizing attitude is completely inappropriate and ignores the fact that we are a high-achieving public charter school that is providing unparalleled opportunities for immigrant communities from the Middle East and Southeast Asia, among other students who choose to attend FAME. It also ignores the special role our Independent Study staff and families play in our school. We celebrate the diversity of our students; however, we also recognize that FAME families are of multiple faiths and backgrounds, many of whom immigrated to the United States to escape religious and cultural persecution. We take very seriously our commitment to providing these families a respectful, tolerant and open learning environment.

Today, we could not be more proud of the accomplishments of our students. They are making continuous academic gains, with improvement in student achievement test scores growing each year. However, the New York Times once again incorrectly asserts that FAME lags behind Fremont public schools. Due to the hard work of our talented staff and teachers, we attract students from seven counties and enroll families from fifteen school districts in Alameda County alone who see FAME as the best available public school option for their children, especially those seeking English language assistance. FAME outperforms nearly every other public school and school district with similar demographics, a fact the New York Times had access to but failed to report.

FAME did experience growing pains since its inception in 2005. For example, local districts refused to hand over our share of State money and attempted to prevent the continuation of our school by holding our funding hostage. Loans were necessary for legal fees and the deepening political battles, as well as developing sites and facilities, as charter schools, unlike their traditional counterparts, are not provided with a place to teach kids! We were the first charter school in the State of California that sued a local district for our fair share of funding and won, and set a precedent for all charter schools to come. Now, many charter schools that would have otherwise closed are able to reference our case as evidence that districts need to comply with fund distribution.

Unfortunately, the Times article is factually misleading in its reporting of FAME's financial practices. The financial audit that is cited by the Times was released nearly a year ago, which FAME took seriously and immediately took corrective actions for. No illegal practices were found and on the contrary, the auditors commended FAME leadership for their ability to stay open during such massive growth and lagging state funding. The District Attorney's office reviewed the claims that prompted the audit and found no merit in them. Today, we are a model of fiscal health, even as nearby school districts are struggling with their own financial stability. Much of what you are hearing in the news is an attempt to remove the leadership (including myself) that has made our school so successful.

Finally, the article goes to great lengths to try and tarnish me and my work on behalf of FAME. It would take too long to list all the inaccuracies in the article as they relate to me; however, those of you who have known me for a long time know that I have poured my heart and soul into FAME and, before that, BASIS. I am passionate about ensuring our kids get the best education possible and I would never knowingly do anything to put the future of the

school in jeopardy. No monies that were delegated for books and materials or instructional support were ever paid to me. On the contrary, over the past 9 years I have generated approximately 2 million dollars in free money for the school, over and above what the State would normally fund, to purchase new books and materials that other school districts would like to have but cannot afford.

Running public schools is a complicated, political process. In this time of extreme budget cuts to education, those who have been unable to compete with our small and personalized learning environment are taking viscous stabs at our leadership to eliminate us a public option at all costs. While we are again disappointed by the New York Times article, we are remaining focused on meeting the needs of our students and providing them with a quality education. I am very grateful for the dedication and commitment of FAME's staff and teachers with this regard in particular- they have never lost focus, and look forward to continuing to serve the communities that are in most need of a quality public charter school option like FAME. I also want to thank the Alameda County Board of Education, who yesterday, and despite strong opposition by Fremont Unified School District, unanimously ratified the decision they made to renew our school charter on January 12, 2010. In addition, I want to particularly thank Superintendent Sheila Jordan and her Associate Superintendent of Business, Ms. Carlene Naylor, for confirming in a public hearing yesterday that the District Attorney's office found no merit in the claims against FAME.

As the old adage goes, "what does not kill you only makes you stronger". Today, FAME is stronger than ever and looking forward to re-focusing its efforts on enhancing the learning environment for our children and increasing academic performance. Our children are the future and nothing, no matter what any news articles says, is more important than our children.

Thank you,

Maram Alaiwat  
Founder and CEO  
FAME Public Charter School

P.S. I want to remind our parents that there will be another town hall style meeting at the Kearney Street campus in Fremont at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, February 23, 2010. Please bring any questions you may have or contact me at [basischarter@aol.com](mailto:basischarter@aol.com) if you cannot attend and would like to speak to me.