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FAME CHRONICLES FOUR YEARS OF SUCCESS IN ITS BID FOR CHARTER RENEWAL

FAME Public Charter School touts academic gains, parental support and exemplary success with new immigrants and English Learners in its renewal application

Fremont, CA – FAME Public Charter School (FAME), approved in 2005 as Alameda County’s first and only countywide charter school, submitted its application for renewal this month to the Alameda County Office of Education. FAME currently operates three public charter campuses and an independent study program, attracting students from seven counties, as well as from fifteen school districts within Alameda County. FAME is the only countywide charter school providing specialized educational opportunities to Alameda County’s new immigrant population from the Middle East and Southeast Asia.

FAME grew out of the identified need to provide specialized instruction to the Bay Area’s large and underserved Middle Eastern and Southeast Asian communities. More than twenty-five percent of FAME’s students are classified as “English Learners” whose native languages include Arabic, Urdu, Farsi and Pashto. Of FAME’s English Learners, nearly 70 percent speak Arabic or Urdu at home. A similar number of their students are considered “socioeconomically disadvantaged,” qualifying for free or reduced priced lunches.

With an emphasis on cultural sensitivity, as well as a programmatic focus on English proficiency, FAME is leading the way in closing the achievement gap within Alameda County’s traditionally underserved immigrant community. In 2008-09, nearly one third of FAME’s English Learners were re-designated as fluent in English and sixty-one percent of FAME’s re-designated students scored at proficient or advanced in English on the spring 2009 state tests.

FAME’s bilingual staff and teachers speak a total of eleven languages, allowing FAME to serve a broad range of the Bay Area’s new immigrant community. Additionally, parents and students most often choose FAME because they often lack the ability to communicate with surrounding school districts, where it is not cost effective to hire staff who speak those languages.

“These last four years have been extremely rewarding,” said FAME Founder and Director Maram Alaiwat. “We are proud of the many successes of FAME, our parents and teachers, and most of all, our students. I am especially proud of our ability to help students who came to us with little or no ability to speak English become fluent in a short period of time. Upon renewal, FAME will continue to provide high-quality and specialized educational opportunities to Alameda County’s diverse community.”

On statewide tests and measures of achievement, FAME has continued to show improvement, from an Academic Performance Index (API) of 709 in 2005 to 743 this year. Their academic success has fueled a growth in the number of parents choosing to send their children to FAME. The 785 students that started at FAME in 2005 have grown to 1,500 this year.

FAME students generally fall into at least one of the following categories:

- Students who are underperforming due to either socioeconomic factors or language barriers.
- Students who have special needs, whether gifted, disabled or both, and ranging from those who would benefit from acceleration to those who require therapeutic services embedded in their regular educational program.
- Students whose families, whether for religious or cultural reasons, have avoided public schooling for fear that their children would be ridiculed, threatened or at risk of losing their personal values.
- Students who are interested in learning the Arabic language.

FAME submitted its renewal application on September 16. Alameda County now has 60 days in which to schedule a public hearing to consider the application. Charter schools in California must go through a renewal process every five years and FAME is petitioning the county to renew its charter so that it may continue serving students through the 2014-2015 school year.

About FAME Public Charter School

FAME Public Charter School (FAME) was founded in 2005 as the first and only countywide charter school serving Alameda County. A high-achieving charter school specializing in getting its students fluent in English and Arabic, FAME currently operates three public charter school campuses, as well as an independent study program. FAME serves Alameda County’s diverse immigrant population, with the goal of preparing all its students to graduate and attend college. FAME strives to create an education community where students from all social, academic and economic backgrounds can learn to their highest potential. Visit FAME at www.famecharter.org.

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