



Alameda Sun

Vol. 5 • No. 23

Locally Owned, Community Oriented

Thursday, February 23, 2006

Charter Renewed After Unanimous Vote

Jan. 31, a group of youth leaders from BASE presented and defended their charter petition, which they co-wrote with the adult staff of BASE, to the trustees. The youth team had worked over the last several years, and intensively for the last four months, on gathering input, redesigning, and rewriting the school's charter to ensure that the founders' principles were being implemented.

"This level of youth ownership and leadership is a dramatic departure from business as usual in schools. For youth to work so hard over so many months on behalf of their school and their own educa-

tion is truly amazing. Social action like this is a big part of the reason BASE has had so much success over our first charter term," said Page Tompkins, BASE director.

BASE recruits youth who have been unsuccessful or unchallenged in traditional school settings. It employs a model described as "enterprise learning" that integrates college-preparatory academic subjects, real world social action projects, and youth ownership and leadership. Over the course of the last five years, BASE students have completed over 25 social action projects, including founding a 1.5 acre community garden, hosting a community forum highlighting veteran's rights and the impact of war, and organizing a statewide youth forum for students in charter schools. BASE currently serves 92 youth from Alameda and Oakland, more than half of whom are considered by the state to be educationally disadvantaged. At the same time, scores on the state-mandated standardized tests rose by 22 percent.

"It is great to follow in the footsteps of the youth who wrote the

original charter," said Josh Pasqualini, a BASE senior. "Knowing that the work done this year will shape BASE's future makes it even more engaging and fulfilling. When I came to BASE, I was socially awkward. Now I feel like a young world leader. The work we have done on the BASE charter ensures that future youth will get the same growth opportunities I had."

Charter schools are unique public schools that operate on special contracts, or "charters," from an authorizing school district. Charter schools enjoy more autonomy over curriculum and school design in exchange for increased accountability for results. Charter schools report their results annually to their district and every five years they petition their school district for an additional term based on those results.

BASE is a program of Alternatives in Action, Inc. (AIA), a non-profit corporation. AIA also operates HOME Project, an after-school program serving youth in Alameda and Oakland public schools, and HOME Sweet HOME Preschool.