

## **Enterprise Learning The Story of the Bay Area School of Enterprise (BASE)**

### **The History of BASE:**

The Bay Area School of Enterprise (BASE) is a public charter high school that serves youth primarily from Alameda and West Oakland.

In February 2001, a group of ten youth known as the “Charter Design Team,” from a youth community organization called HOME Project, working in partnership with adult experts, designed, wrote, and submitted the first ever youth-initiated charter school petition in the country. After receiving a unanimous vote of approval from the Alameda Unified School District Board of Trustees on May 16, 2001 BASE opened in September 2001. BASE was designed with the support and coaching of Alternatives in Action, a community and youth development program that has been active in the Bay Area since 1997. BASE continues to operate as part of Alternatives in Action on Alameda Point at 2750 Todd Street, Alameda, CA 94501.

The Design Team created a school based on a “Enterprise Learning,” a method of learning that the design team created, grounded in the practices of HOME Project and enhanced by their exploration of other school programs. BASE was to have three main focuses:

- All graduates would be ready, eligible and prepared for college and the world of work.
- Youth would have input and influence over all decisions that affected them.
- Youth work would matter in the real world, meaning that learning should be applied through real world, impactful projects that benefit the community.

BASE opened with 47 students in its pilot year and began with the 9<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grades. BASE expanded in year two to 65 youth and will reach its target enrollment of 130 by 2005.



### **Mission and Purpose of BASE:**

#### **Mission of BASE:**

The mission statement of BASE, as developed by the youth charter design team, is:

*We are intelligent and committed youth who want to see change in our world and are assertive about achieving it. We see that traditional high schools do not meet the needs of all teenagers. We are providing an innovative alternative learning environment that will better serve today's youth. At the Bay Area School of Enterprise, each youth will*

*create an individual plan incorporating enterprise, project-based learning, internships, small group instruction, and independent study, as appropriate to the way each individual best learns. Because learning occurs everywhere in the real world, our school will seek learning opportunities throughout our neighborhood, community, region, nation and world. Our school will graduate powerful new citizens who are ready to take responsibility for the future. It will be a model of what is possible in education when youth are empowered to take charge of their own learning.*

The BASE Charter also states that BASE will place special emphasis on serving youth who have been unsuccessful or unchallenged in traditional schools.

### **BASE Principles:**

BASE youth strive for the 5 R's:

**Responsibility:** refers to the expectation that each member will hold themselves and others personally accountable for the achievement of their goals, the success of their projects, and the success of their education. In BASE this responsibility is described in the often repeated idea that “there is no it or they, there is only us,” suggesting that success or failure is in each individual or group’s hands, not the responsibility of some other staff person, administrator, or coach (the term used to describe all adult staff).

**Rigor:** refers to the expectation that youth and adult members of BASE will apply strenuous effort towards the attainment of their personal and community goals embodied in their endeavors in BASE. Learning for each member should be a stretch and goals should always be set beyond the realm of comfortable attainment.

**Risk:** refers to the real chance of failure or loss as a result of practicing the other “R’s.” It is a firm principle that without risking failure, learners (which include both youth and adults) cannot truly become daring leaders and citizens.

**Real:** refers to the expectation that both the youth and adults of BASE are their authentic selves and commit themselves to authentic work in the community and with one another.

**Relationships:** refers to the primacy of interpersonal exchanges, expectations, accountability, and respect. It is the role of adults and youth alike to concentrate on reaching out and knowing other people in the community for who they are as opposed to solely their position or role within BASE. In order to do great work in the world, we must know and be known by other people.

### **Effective Citizenship:**

BASE seeks to help youth and adults develop into effective citizens. Effective citizens are members of the community who know what they think, feel, believe, and who know how to take meaningful action in the world.

## Enterprise Learning:

*As a [freshman] at BASE, I learn daily about the importance of literature, mathematics, and history. In addition to these though, I am also encouraged to develop public speaking skills, handle important events of the school and interact with adults... BASE is by far the most interactive school I have ever attended.*

— Josh Pasqualini  
Class of 2006

The program at BASE is grounded in the belief that our minds are designed for complex, situated learning. Learning best occurs when youth are engaged in real work on projects they helped to choose and create and that have meaning for their lives. Lasting learning engages multiple intelligences and varying learning styles.

BASE's approach to education, "Enterprise Learning," is a developmental approach that integrates youth development practices, experiential education, constructivism, and traditional college preparatory learning. Enterprise learning emphasizes project creation and performance as a tool to enhance personal efficacy, reading, writing, and public speaking. BASE provides a powerful alternative to a traditional school environment by focusing on small, group-based learning, in which students in project teams work with adult staff, peers and community members to reach real-world outcomes.

Curricula that fulfill Enterprise Learning include the following criteria:

- Opportunities for youth choice/personalization
- Enterprises meeting "7 A's" requirements including applying course concepts
- Attention to group process (group forming, deconstruction, reconstruction, high performance, reflection)
- Identified public performances
- Authentic assessments of youth learning including a clear process for developing learning plans and Presentations of Learning (POL).
- Youth ownership and leadership at multiple levels.
- Rigorous intellectual development that focuses on habits of mind as opposed to merely information retention.

## Enterprises:

The real world projects youth at BASE design and implement are called enterprises. Through co-creating and implementing community enterprises, youth develop their core academic skills, their habits of mind, and their sense of self-efficacy. Enterprises at BASE are real and dramatic, have a meaningful impact on the community, and are designed to enhance and apply the academic content of their coursework. To successfully complete an enterprise, youth must develop and defend their enterprise proposal, develop measures of success for the project, and then self evaluate and report on their success and shortfalls. Enterprises are developed using the 7 A's of project design described above. Enterprises at BASE are designed to meet rigorous criteria.

The 7 A's:

Authenticity

- o Enterprise is “real world” – it meets a real need in the community
- o Enterprise has meaning and value to the youth
- o The enterprise constitutes daring action. It is public and involves risk

#### Academic Rigor

- o The enterprise applies knowledge central to the disciplines and content areas youth have explored or will explore.
- o The enterprise requires youth to develop higher order thinking skills and habits of mind.
- o The enterprise requires rigorous work including reading, writing, research, formal presentations, and understanding of new disciplines or development of other academic skills.

#### Applied Learning

- o The enterprise clearly links to and applies specific course outcomes (as listed in the course syllabus).
- o Enterprises take place in the world beyond BASE
- o The enterprise requires youth to use skills and develop competencies expected in the world of work (Time-management, use of technology, problem solving, creative thinking, professional communication, learning skills, and collaborative work skills.)
- o Enterprise requires youth to develop organizational and self-management skills.
- o Enterprise improves youths’ understanding of community needs and how to take meaningful action.

#### Active Exploration

- o Youth spend significant time doing “field based work” or work in the community (focus group meetings, presentations to other organizations, building collaborative partnerships, presenting to community panels).
- o Enterprise requires real investigation, using a variety of methods (i.e. focus groups, traditional research, site visits, stakeholder interviews, etc.)
- o Youth are expected to communicate what they are learning through presentations and performances.

#### Adult Relationships

- o Enterprise requires youth to meet and interact with adults with relevant expertise and experience.
- o Youth have the opportunity to work closely with at least one adult.
- o Enterprises are a collaborative partnership between youth and coach(s). Coach(s) are personally invested in the enterprise and committed to its success.

#### Assessment Practices

- o Youth reflect regularly on their learning using clear enterprise criteria that they co-created (i.e. measures of success, group agreements, individual performance outcomes).
- o Adults from outside the group (other BASE coaches, community adults) provide feedback and/or expert assistance to ensure that youths’ work meets real world standards.

- o Overall performance on project, using BASE methods such as portfolios and presentations of learning, will measure the extent to which the “6 A’s” were achieved by each youth and/or project group.

**Attainable:**

- o The enterprise has a realistic project plan that can reasonably be accomplished in the time allotted or in the time the youth have committed.
- o The enterprise has a clear and realistic budget including sources of income.
- o If the enterprise requires financial resources to sustain it beyond the life of the proposing group, there is a clear business plan with committed resources.

*Based on the “6 A’s” Developed by Steinberg, Real learning, real work: School to work as high school reform.*

Through co-creating and implementing enterprises, collaborative ownership of the school, and work on engaging curriculum, youth develop both their core skills and their habits of mind. Core skills include reading, writing, and public speaking skills, numeracy skills, social and historical analysis, linguistic diversity, and scientific reasoning. Habits of mind include:

- o Curiosity: A sense of wonder about the world.
- o Connections: The ability to see the connections between concepts, thoughts, feelings and actions, constructing their own “big picture” understanding of the world. To understand how their course content has meaning in the real world.
- o Perspective: To understand multiple perspectives and to be able to seek out, critique, defend and value differing points of view.
- o Evidence: To seek and provide evidence for their conclusions.
- o Relevance: To understand the importance of their projects, ideas, and feelings.
- o Meta-Cognition: Meta-cognition is the self-awareness of cognitive processing and the ability to control them. Youth should understand not just what they learn, but how they learn it and why. The ability to process meta-cognitively is an important aspect of most learning theories and a key element of constructivism specifically.

**Presentations of Learning:**

Presentations of learning are BASE’s authentic assessment where youth present their work to members of the community for evaluation and feedback. The presentation of learning process starts with the creation of learning plans. The purpose of learning plans is to allow youth (and adults) to understand and own significant aspects of their own learning, and to ensure that their work meets real world standards.

Learning plans focus on three areas: Personal Development, Social Action, and Intellectual Development. The learning plan development process includes: identifying strengths and challenges, goal setting, strategic planning, and learning plan presentations. Learning plans help guide the work of the year and are revisited as part of the end of the year presentations of learning.

As youth work, they assemble the evidence of their academic and personal progress into portfolios, a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the student's efforts,

progress, and achievement across the curriculum. In Presentations of Learning (POLs), youth present their portfolios to a panel of diverse community adults who challenge the young people and provide feedback. This process creates a real world standard that provides urgency and relevance for youth as they work towards their goals over the course of the year. Portfolios and POLs do not supplant traditional assessment, but rather enhance it. In BASE's case, extensive writing is an important element of the program for example, and only a student's best work would be included in the portfolio.

### **Enterprises:**

The following are brief descriptions of the major enterprises of the first three years of BASE:

#### **Alameda Point Garden Cooperative:**



The community garden was an idea that started due to a joint effort between the Alameda Point Collaborative (APC) and BASE. We worked together and in partnership with Alameda Point residents to design and create a community garden on an acre and a half of land. In May 2002, over 300 volunteers were mobilized to break ground on the garden and build the heart of what would become a center of community activity. The garden cooperative was

formed after the completion of the garden and is made up of representatives from APC, Alameda Point Residents, BASE (including youth and adults), and The West End Environmental Group. The Garden Cooperative is the decision making body for maintaining and altering the community garden.

#### **HOME Sweet HOME Pre-School:**

HOME Sweet HOME Pre-School is a fully licensed pre-school center, which is a hive of activity and learning for twelve 2-4 year olds. HOME Sweet HOME was founded by HOME Project youth in 2001 and continues to be staffed and co-run with youth. In 2002-2003 youth enrolled in the Developmental Psychology of Children course used HOME Sweet HOME as their real world lab. In addition to working directly with the young children, designing and implementing curriculum, youth spearheaded the redesign of the HOME Sweet HOME playground including new murals, a hand built playhouse, and a vegetable garden.



#### **Hands In: Youth and Adults Continuing to Change the World:**

On Saturday, June 7<sup>th</sup> 2003 BASE youth hosted "Hands In" a youth and adult summit and celebration. "Hands In" was



the culminating enterprise for BASE youth and adults in 2003. The purpose of a culminating enterprise is to create a real and dramatic project that engages the outside community, brings the BASE community together, builds on the project work of the year, and integrates and punctuates the curricula of all BASE classes.

Our hope for “Hands In” was to bring youth and adults from around the Bay Area together to acknowledge, rejuvenate, and celebrate the work of dedicated youth activists across the Bay Area. This felt particularly urgent to the youth of BASE in the context of the looming war, education funding cuts, and violence in Bay Area communities. BASE youth felt that the constant barrage of negativism was disheartening to youth who were committed to positive change.

Over 200 participants attended the event and participated in interactive workshops, creative projects, and live performances. 35 individual donors combined their support with the donations of participating adults and the efforts of community supporters who contributed time and materials to make this event possible and a resounding success!

*During “Hands In” I had big responsibilities. Even though it was hard, we did it!*

-Melinda O’Neil,  
Class of 2005

Although BASE hosted “Hands In,” the development of the event came from the input of many organizations and individuals.

Community organizations and individuals who attended and facilitated workshops and activities included: YouTHink, Girls Inc. of

the Island City, Youth Epic and Youth Prevention Project, Relationship Abuse Prevention (RAP), Nika Quirk- Conversation Café, and Ida Razick- Artist.

Hands In also provided a forum for the BASE seniors to complete their final presentations of learning. Presentations of learning require seniors to demonstrate evidence of intellectual, professional, and personal development. The presentations of learning at “Hands In” included two components. The first was a formal presentation in which seniors provided evidence of their successful completion of the requirements and defended their work before a panel of community members. The second component was the senior “Fire walk” which required seniors to demonstrate their personal power and presence through sharing their hopes and fears with a group of peers, adult coaches and community members. Seniors were required to pass their presentation of learning in order to graduate. (Please see “Presentations of Learning” in this report for more information).

### Candidates Night:

On October 28, 2003 a group of 20 youth, a mix of 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders, at BASE facilitated and hosted a Candidates Night. All of the mayoral, city council and school board candidates in Alameda were invited to speak on their future plans for Alameda should they be elected in the next week to their respective offices. Specifically, BASE youth felt it necessary to inquire about the candidates’ positions on West Alameda’s economic development, affordable housing, environmental issues, Naval Base Reuse

Plan, and education issues. Because BASE is located in West Alameda, and the majority of its youth lived in that area, the issues they targeted were also looked at in the context of how each effected the low-income population and communities of color of West Alameda.

Prior to Candidates Night, youth who hosted and facilitated the event did a series of research projects in order to prepare. Each youth researched the candidates' personal backgrounds, the issues each of them cared about the most, and future changes they claimed would develop if

*The projects bring people (young and old) together in a context of collaboration. The common work fosters relationships.*

— Community Member

they were elected. Alameda community members were also research subjects. Small groups from the BASE group interviewed key community members who were integral in West Alameda's development. Youth spoke to residents, the Executive Director of the Alameda Point Collaborative, a representative from the City of Alameda's City Development Department, and a representative from Catellus—a company who was commissioned to develop major sections of West Alameda. Each community member gave their opinions about how West Alameda was already changing and the direction they hoped new local politicians would take the city.

After information was gathered, the youth came up with questions for each candidate. The format for the evening was shaped with some influence from an Alameda School Board Candidates Forum held by the Alameda League of Women Voters and Alameda Collaborative for Children Youth and their Families group Alameda Teen Action Council (ATAC). ATAC was a co-sponsor and co-host for the BASE Candidates Night. Their main focus was on school board candidates and distributing information they compiled about each candidate.

During the October 28, 2002 event, over 125 people attended and participated in BASE's Candidates Night. All candidates, with the exception of 4, attended this event. BASE youth designed a fast paced agenda where mayoral, city council and school board members were separated into their respected groups. Event attendees were split into three groups that rotated to each candidate grouping throughout the evening.

Although a few attendees complained that they were not able to ask the candidates questions directly, the HOME BASE building was packed with people from the community. Many of the BASE students were speaking to a large audience for the first time in their lives. This granted young people in West Alameda the opportunity to directly interact with their local representatives.

### 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Conference:

In October 2002 a group of BASE youth, in partnership with HOME Project, planned and hosted an 8<sup>th</sup> grade conference. The conference generated ideas and energy for the launch of middle school after school programs to be held at Chipman Middle School and Wood Middle School. Over 60 8<sup>th</sup> graders from around Alameda attended and generated ideas

that lead to a youth events group and several arts groups. After initiating the programs, BASE youth partnered with HOME Project staff to youth coach the after school groups.

#### Family Dialogue Night:

At the start of the second semester we had to chose new projects. The freshman team continued two of their projects from the first semester. Some of the students who had not been working on those projects wanted to create their own project. They decided they wanted to see parents and their kids talking more and getting to know each other and they wanted to show families that they could enjoy one another and get to know each other. The group went through a series of activities that attempted to make the communication barriers in families clear, and then families worked through a shared art project about themselves while simultaneously having a conversation based on prompts that were provided. In the end, families and youth alike agreed that new pathways of communication had been opened.

#### Charter Schools Leadership Summit:

Since the founding of BASE, students have presented at conferences around the state and country about BASE's powerful model for teaching and learning. While this has always been a rewarding experience, BASE youth often felt that the experience and knowledge of youth was not prioritized or valued at these forums to the extent merited. A group of 8 youth decided to take matters into their own hands. In partnership with the Charter Schools Development Center and CharterVoice, BASE co-hosted the Charter Schools Leadership Summit. BASE youth organized a youth summit that was attended by 50 youth from 12 schools around the state. BASE youth also delivered a speech to the general session of over 400 educational leaders, and presented workshops on enterprise learning, youth leadership, and experiential education.

#### Alameda Point Environment Organizing Night:

A group of youth, recognizing the importance of a healthy environment, created and hosted a two-hour event featuring interactive booths to inform the community about environmental organizations and projects at Alameda Point. Over 100 community members attended the event. Participants included the Alameda Point Collaborative, the Alameda Naval Air Stations Restoration Advisory Board, the Sierra Club, the Alameda National Wildlife Refuge, and the Alameda Point Garden Cooperative, Indian People Organizing for Change, the Development Services Department and the Audubon Society.

#### Cultural Asset Map:

A group of youth, many of who are from immigrant families, felt that immigrant populations do not have adequate access to and information about available services within the Bay Area. They spent 4 months investigating organizations that provide services to immigrant populations and created an East Bay map where services were

available. The group presented their map at the Juneteenth Festival at Alameda Point to ensure that the community was aware of the resources available to them.

### Juneteenth:

Each June, BASE culminates with a final enterprise that brings the whole school community together to end the year with a bang. In 2004, BASE partnered with the Alameda Point Collaborative to host a Juneteenth community event. Juneteenth is the oldest known celebration commemorating the end of slavery in the United States, and has evolved into a festival celebrating family, multi-culturalism and equality. Over 400 community members attended. In addition to co-planning the event, BASE youth organized booths and donated the proceeds to the Alameda Point Community Garden.

### “Express Yourself” BASE Benefit Night:

During the spring semester, juniors and seniors learned about the Harlem Renaissance by focusing on poetry and the development of popular culture within the African American community. To understand and connect the concepts of this time period to their prior knowledge, they compared the lyrics of rap songs and popular poetry of today with poems of similar themes found during the 1920s-40s. Youth then wrote and recited their own poetry, painted at least one painting each, and recited the poetry written by contemporary and Harlem renaissance poets. They showcased these art forms at *Express Yourself: BASE's Benefit Night*, which also raised money for the school. At the benefit, youth from all the grade levels performed poetry and spoken word, rapped, sang and even played the guitar. They also displayed the paintings created. Over 70 people attended in a cafe style configuration.

### **BASE Education Laboratory: Influencing Educators from Around the World:**

A key part of the BASE mission is that our school “will be a model of what is possible in education when youth are empowered to take charge of their own learning.” In order to make this aspect of the mission real, BASE youth and adults are committed to an ongoing effort to ensure that the BASE strategies of Enterprise Learning, Youth Ownership, and Positive Youth Development as key components of education are shared with the youth services and education field in order to influence how other programs and schools operate. BASE directly engaged with over 1000 educators and youth leaders in 2002-2003. The following are some examples of major presentations and partnerships:

#### Cross-City Campaign for Urban School Reform:

The Cross City Campaign is a national network of parents, advocates, community organizers, teachers, principals, central office administrators, policy analysts, union officials and funders dedicated to improving public schools and education for urban young people. The Cross City Campaign mission is to fundamentally transform urban public education, resulting in improved quality and equity, so that all youth are well prepared for post-secondary education, work and citizenship. Cross City Campaign

advocates believe all urban students, especially students from low-income families, children of color, students with disabilities and those whose first language is not English, deserve high quality, equitable, public schools to support and nurture their minds, talents and dreams.

During their national conference in April 2003, held in Oakland, the Cross City Campaign highlighted BASE as a model school. BASE youth hosted educators and activists from Baltimore, Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, and Seattle. BASE youth and adults also participated in the three-day conference.

#### Dutch Principals:

For the second year, a group of 40 Principals from the Netherlands visited BASE. The principals were hosted by a group of BASE youth who explained the concepts of Enterprise Learning and fielded questions from the group. The Principals came to the United States to learn about innovative instructional practices that they could implement in their home schools in the Netherlands.

#### Movement Strategies Center:

The Movement Strategy Center (MSC) is a movement building intermediary that engages youth and adults across issues and regions - through a collective visioning and mapping process that encourages collaboration and joint strategizing in order to develop stronger, more effective movements for democracy, equity and social change. They focus intently on supporting the civic participation of youth and young adults and linking them to other community change efforts.

MSC was developed to better coordinate information about resources and needs; address the lack of broader networks and a communications infrastructure to share ideas and best practices; provide for specific trainings for bridge-building leadership; and to support groups in developing regional strategies that support and transcend organizational goals.

MSC brought youth activists and educators from around the United States to BASE to see and experience Enterprise Learning and how BASE connects young people to community projects in order to develop effective and powerful citizens.

#### Center for Youth Development and Policy Research:

The Center's mission is to create and strengthen the infrastructures that support positive development for all youth in America. Activities include public education, research, policy formulation, and technical assistance aimed at U.S. communities, which seek to expand opportunities and support systems for disadvantaged young people.

The Center's staff was hosted by the youth and adults of BASE to learn about how BASE integrates positive youth development into all facets of the educational experience.

### California Network of Educational Charters (CANEC):

In March 2003, BASE youth and adults shared and advocated for the Enterprise Learning approach at the CANEC annual conference. CANEC was the membership and professional organization serving the nearly 500 public charter schools in the State of California. CANEC's mission was to increase student achievement by strengthening and expanding public charter schools throughout California (CANEC has now become the California Charter Schools Association). BASE youth conducted a workshop for youth and educators on Enterprise Learning, attended by 50 charter school leaders, and participated on a student panel in front of 300 educators. BASE also screened the documentary "We Are Here Together," about the first year of BASE, to 100 educators. The film received rave reviews and led to additional visits to BASE.

### Stanford University College of Education:

BASE youth put on their professor hats and conducted a 2-hour class for a group of graduate students in education at Stanford University. The lecture and activities were part of Milbrey McLaughlin's graduate course, which focuses on schools and organizations that promote positive youth and community development. Professor McLaughlin was a contributing writer to, *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development*, by the National Research Council, and the Author of *Urban Sanctuaries: Neighborhood Organizations in the Lives and Futures of Inner-City Youth*. McLaughlin has been a long time supporter of Alternatives in Action, and her graduate students have worked with BASE and other Alternatives in Action programs since our inception.



### UC Berkeley School of Social Welfare:

The Berkeley School of Social Welfare has long been recognized for its high educational standards, innovative research activities and commitment to the social services. Graduate students in the program are highly motivated and play an active role in fostering a participatory educational experience. The program strives to form a community that is committed to the highest standards of excellence in social welfare education, research and service.

In September of 2002, 10 graduate students from the program visited BASE to learn about our method of integrating positive youth development and education. The graduate students were hosted by the Adolescent Psychology class, a group of 15 BASE youth who were becoming experts in youth development.

### Small School Developers and Leaders:

BASE has also been visited by leaders from over 35 schools that were either in development or newly opened. These education leaders came to BASE to learn from our

experiences in charter design and the birthing process of a new school. Again, visitors were most interested in trainings regarding youth empowerment, community involvement, and integrating real and dramatic experience into academic learning.

: A key part of the BASE mission is that BASE “will be a model of what is possible in education when youth are empowered to take charge of their own learning.” In order to make this aspect of the mission real, BASE youth and adults share the BASE strategies of Enterprise Learning, Youth Ownership, and Positive Youth Development with the youth services and education field. BASE directly engaged with over 1200 educators and youth leaders in 2003-2004. The following are some examples of major presentations and partnerships:

- o Communication Arts and Science school within a school from Berkeley High School.
- o Charter Schools Development Center
- o Pathways Charter High School
- o Y-Tech Program
- o The Big Picture Schools
- o University of California, Berkeley School of Education

### **Youth Adult Collaboration:**

#### Youth Adult Council:

The YA Council serves as the youth leadership and peer discipline elements of the BASE governance structure; they serve as leaders and role models for other youth, within BASE and outside.

The Purpose of the YA Council includes:

- To increase youth ownership of BASE.
- To share responsibility for BASE operations and governance between youth and adults.
- To take responsibility for ensuring behavioral agreements are being kept by all members of the community.
- To improve reading, writing, oral communication, planning, facilitation, research skills and data management.
- To understand issues and structure of federalism and state and local government.
- To understand the role of effective citizens in civil society.
- To understand current events related to government and the rights of young people.

YA Council members are elected by youth or are appointed to the YA council by project groups to represent specific needs in the BASE community (such as after school program, the evaluation team, or the final project work). YA Council members are also on the BASE Governing Board and a sub-committee of the YA Council serves as the Situation Evaluation Team (SET) whose purpose is to resolve conflicts, issues, and policy violations within the community.

Enterprise: BASE:

Enterprise: BASE project group that focuses on BASE as a school, community organization and business in the context of the educational/political/economic environment. Enterprise: BASE youth function as “Co-Directors” with the BASE Director. Youth learn and understand all aspects of BASE as an operating organization. Youth satisfactorily completing the course earn college preparatory, academic elective credit for State & Local Government and Economics of Business (both satisfy the “G” requirement for University of California and California State University admissions).

Project work will include representing BASE to WASC, Charter Schools Conference, Annual Report/SARC, prospective students and their families, funders, the public, and Representing BASE to the AUSD School Board. Enterprise: BASE youth will also prepare the BASE annual report and partnering with the Alternatives in Action Evaluation Team to determine if BASE is having the impact we intend to have.

Purpose of the enterprise:

- To understand and lead BASE as a non-profit business.
- To increase youth ownership of BASE.
- To share responsibility for BASE sustainability and development between youth and adults.
- To work on a very high stakes, real world enterprise: BASE
- To improve reading, writing, oral communication, research skills and data management.
- To understand issues related to the education system
- To understand issues and structure of federalism and state and local government.
- To understand the role of effective citizens in civil society.
- To understand BASE as a not-for-profit business & BASE’s role in the local economy.
- To understand current events related to youth development and education

“Plumbers”:

A volunteer committee of youth who followed up on community feedback of program elements that needed to be “fixed.”

HOME Project E Team:

After school group of youth leaders responsible for coordinating the after school program and integrating it with BASE.

Youth Coaching:

Youth who “co-coach” groups including designing curriculum, providing instruction, and offering support. In addition to programs at BASE, youth coach after school programs at 2 middle schools, another High School, and the College of Alameda.

Peer Counseling:

A group of youth who are trained to provide psychosocial support to other youth.

#### **Personalized Learning:**

Every youth is required to take the lead in their own learning through the development and defense of their own learning plans.

#### **Project Groups:**

Every group is given significant authority, together with their coach, to design and lead their own project work according to the project criteria.

#### **Skills Seminars:**

Youth designed and lead elective classes that meet twice weekly.

#### **Youth Advocating for Their School:**

##### **WASC Accreditation:**

On October 7th, 2003, BASE had its initial visit from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). WASC is the organization that accredits schools and Universities in California and Hawaii. BASE received the highest possible endorsement for an initial visit: interim accreditation. This means that BASE is now accredited! According to the most recent data from WASC, less than half of the schools that apply are accredited on their first visit. WASC was represented by a delegation that included Dr. David Brown, the Executive Director of the Accrediting Commission, and Dr. Bill James, former Superintendent of Pleasanton School District. The visit was hosted by youth and the WASC delegation reported being impressed with the level of youth ownership, the ability of the youth to speak about BASE, and the quality of the BASE academic program. The term of the accreditation is until June 30, 2006.

In their report, the committee specifically commended BASE for (excerpted from the visiting committee report):

- The students for improvements in reading, writing, and public speaking over the past two years.
- The staff and students for maintaining a 95% family participation rate in family events and conferences during the past two years.
- The staff and students for developing the documentary film "We Are Here Together," which was selected for the Mill Valley Film Festival.
- The students for maintaining a 97% attendance record during the past two years
- The students for the warm reception given the visiting committee.
- The staff for developing a positive cooperative learning environment.

- The staff and students for developing and maintaining honest and open relationships.
- The students for effectively and enthusiastically communicating the values and purpose of the school to the community.
- The students for their direct involvement in the governance of the school.

## Negotiating with Alameda Unified School District

### **History of Alternatives in Action**

BASE was created by the youth of HOME Project as part of Alternatives in Action.

*“I think the community has always wanted to do something...but no one really acted on it. And HOME kind of tapped into that tiny tiny voice and became something big. HOME gave us a place and a voice.”*

-Youth Member, HOME

Alternatives in Action (AIA) is a non-profit organization that was founded by Leslie Medine and Diana Gordon in 1994 with the vision of creating and implementing programs that enhance the quality of education and community life for children and youth in the greater Bay Area. In its first few years, AIA launched two major projects—HOME, a youth development program based in the City of Alameda (begun in 1996) and Moving Forward, a residential program in Napa providing independent living skills for developmentally disabled young adults (begun in 1998 and now its own nonprofit organization). In addition, AIA has provided program and development services to various non-profits throughout the Bay Area, including schools and school districts. Since its creation, AIA has built a strong infrastructure, personnel policies, a board of directors, and a fiscal management structure. Over the years, it has successfully raised and managed over \$5 million, reaching the level of \$1.5 million annually in recent years.

### HOME – Building Effective Citizens

The creation and development of HOME has been AIA’s primary focus since its inception. AIA began HOME with the goal of understanding what youth need to develop into self-assured, effective citizens of their communities. Through a unique partnership with the Alameda Unified School District, youth were released during the school day and received elective credit to participate in HOME. In a dramatic departure from the experiences youth had during most of their school day, youth were challenged to collaborate with adult “coaches” at HOME to create an organization that would positively impact young people and the greater community.

HOME’s youth members accepted the challenge and through the development of youth-to-youth assessments, initiated a number of community projects that reflected youth interests and needs. In its first several years, HOME involved over 800 youth and adults in annual youth conferences, started a youth employment agency (WAY) and a child care program, planned an inter-generational arts conference, sponsored a violence and drug-

free nightclub event at the U.S.S. Hornet, and built, in just ten days, the largest outdoor skate park in California with 900 youth and adult volunteers.

In the new millennium, HOME began a tremendous period of growth and development. The first dramatic change was HOME's successful campaign for a new "home" at Alameda Point (the former Naval Air Station), one that would become a gathering place for diverse youth and adults and a hub for youth development, innovative learning, and youth-initiated community change. The second leap was the transformation of this new home, involving over 700 youth and adult volunteers and \$650,000 of donated labor and materials, in a year-long, Community Build renovation that included the expansion of HOME Sweet HOME into a full day, licensed preschool and culminated in a Grand Opening Celebration.

During this same time, HOME youth worked closely with adult staff and volunteers to solidify the infrastructure and vision for the organization. Through a series of community meetings, they wrote the following mission statement to capture the purpose of HOME:

#### HOME Mission Statement

We are the gateway for the future. Through projects and enterprises we build relationships between youth and adults, respond to community needs, and create opportunities for youth expression. We do this everyday and everywhere in order to develop a strong, just community and a diverse generation of daring leaders.

#### The Bay Area School of Enterprise – First Youth-Initiated Charter in the Country

As HOME grew and evolved, it became apparent that youth-adult collaboration on real community projects was not only inspiring young citizens, but also promoting development of important academic skills. After building a new home and foundation, youth and adults determined that HOME could extend and deepen its impact on youth if it became, through the creation of a public charter high school, the primary place where its youth members became educated and prepared for the world.

The Bay Area School of Enterprise (BASE) opened on September 4, 2001 with a diverse group of 45 youth. BASE provides a powerful alternative to a traditional school environment.