

Oklahoma FAME Academy in Comanche, Oklahoma, believes failure is not an option, and this belief becomes a reality for so many that pass through the doors of FAME. FAME stands for Focusing on Alternative Methods in Education. Twenty-two years ago, FAME Academy opened its doors as a one-room alternative school with one teacher. Today, it has evolved into a school with its own campus, its own faculty and a team of community partners and volunteers. A diverse group of students arrive at FAME from five different school districts and three Oklahoma counties. Data from the past seven years shows that while FAME is a rural school in a rural setting, it has many of the same problems that urban schools face: 94% of FAME students live at the poverty level, 60% are considered homeless, 63% do not have a father in the home, 23% are recovered dropouts, and almost 21% were involved in the juvenile justice system. FAME Academy's faculty demonstrates excellence in alternative education every day by giving these at-risk students an opportunity to overcome obstacles and to succeed.

FAME has received numerous federal, state, and local grants throughout the years which has allowed them to build outdoor and indoor greenhouses, create a honeybee farm, and build a fence for their goats. A local grant funded their makerspace in the classroom where students work on STEM activities such as building Bristle Bots for racing or putting together electrical kits.

The Oklahoma Regional Food Bank in Oklahoma City provides food every month to stock FAME's Food Pantry. FAME students organized Farm-to-School district-wide taste tests, held Pre-K tours of FAME, planted fruit trees, and taught garden, bee and goat lessons.

FAME has various strategies to meet the social, emotional, academic, and career readiness needs of students. The high school counselor provides weekly guidance and counseling to help address the current and future needs of each student. Social emotional learning is also addressed through speakers who visit FAME and work with students throughout the year. Last year, the students loved meeting Nick Moore, listening to his motivational message and reading his book *Never Too Late*.

A Nurse Practitioner and Registered Nurse are available for appointments during the day on campus. FAME's Director has worked with Memorial Hospital to provide a form for unaccompanied students to be able to be seen without a parent or guardian present. If these students cannot pay, they are seen without cost. FAME partners with many community members sharing the responsibilities, which will enhance student performance in the school, home and community. FAME has an active Advisory Board that acts as a bridge between the program and the community.

Alternative education works in Oklahoma because of the dedication of programs like FAME. Through diligence, hard work, innovation, and strong partnerships with the community, FAME not only has continued its tradition of excellence, but it has also grown and improved through the challenging times. FAME teachers and staff work to provide an innovative program that reaches at-risk students, helps them graduate, and prepares them for life after graduation.

FAME Academy is a perfect choice to represent the hard-working alternative education programs across the nation.