

## ACADEMY

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is true about that person. Our goal is to challenge their thinking to continually get them to think about their values, getting them to think about their own perspective."

Educating today's children for tomorrow's world but challenging their thoughts to overcome stereotypes, simplification and tolerance is her goal as the Academy's chief administrator.

"Tolerance does not bring about a peaceful society," Jakri said. "I can learn to tolerate people but never learn to like them or accept them. We celebrate diversity here."

### THE FOCUS

Located just north of the William Costick Activities Center in Farmington Hills, the school focuses in the area of technology and international studies.

Eight full-time teachers and one part-time teacher work with 80 students in grades 6 through 12. Students live in Farmington Hills, Southfield, Madison Heights, Dearborn Heights, Rochester Hills, Hamtramck, Detroit, Dearborn and Canton Township. Children are Bangladesh,

American, African American, Iraqi, Lebanese, Albanian and Polish.

A public school of choice, the Academy is often confused with the International School on Middlebelt, which is private and tuition based.

One criticism sometimes leveled against charter schools is there isn't enough oversight. That rankles Jakri, a Westland resident.

"That's the biggest farce about charters in general," she said.

Saginaw Valley State University, which charters the school, is there on a regular basis to check an "oversight notebook." Charters that don't comply with oversight will fail, Jakri said.

"We fulfill the same requirements as any traditional public school has to fulfill," Jakri said.

Teachers are paid a beginning wage of \$30,000 and top out at about \$32,000.

Doug Hansen, a Saginaw Valley State University professor, who has worked with the school, developed the MICLIMB document, an interactive interpretation of the Michigan Core Framework all schools have to utilize, she said.

Hansen will speak at the Michigan Association of Public School Academies conference Oct. 24-25 at the Hyatt Regency in Dearborn.

## Rhaman thrives in Academy's environment

BY SUE BUCK  
STAFF WRITER

Senior Mawa Rhaman is proud to say she has attended Oakland International Academy every year since the charter school began in 1999.

President of the student council, Rhaman lives in Detroit, near Hamtramck.

She attended both public and private schools before coming to the Farmington Hills school.

"I've been in the same house forever," she said. "I've just been moving around schools. I'm the first child so I had to try everything out. I'm the guinea pig in my family. My parents needed to find what was good for how I learned."

Rhaman comes from a family of six children. They are surrounded by an



Student Council President Mawa Rhaman.

extended family which includes grandparents and aunts and uncles. Her brother, Mehdi, attends 10th grade at OIA.

"We have extended families all around, across the street," said Rhaman, who is Muslim. "Everybody is right around us if we need anything."

Her parents like the fact that there's no tuition and the school is small so students receive more one-on-one attention. Parents know the principal on a first-name basis.

Teachers have time to talk, also, and

inform students how they can better themselves. "They really motivate you," Rhaman said. "They tell you what is coming up and what you should look forward to. Whatever we accomplish, they are really excited about it for us as well."

Rhaman heard about OIA through a friend. "She made it sound really nice and fun, things I would really like to do," Rhaman said. "I was able to perform at the highest level I could."

As student council president Rhaman feels that level is set even higher. "To have that responsibility is great, to be looked up at."

She wants to attend the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor and enter the computer software/engineering field. She had a two-month apprenticeship at U of M last summer and worked under the guidance of a chemical engineering professor.

### THE INVASIONS

Students are used to Jakri's self-described "invasions"—an open door policy that allows visitors in the classrooms.

"Students will smile and wave at prospective students. 'Oh, are you going to come to our school?' Jakri said they ask. 'It puts them on the spot.'"

Jakri's been in education since 1986, and has been a public and private school teacher

born and raised in Arizona, she found Michigan has an international flavor, more opportunity and the state is known for education, she said.

Noting there aren't many charter schools in Oakland County, she has high praise for traditional public schools. "The traditional schools in Oakland County, overall, are fabulous. The schools are great."

Charters offer an option for

those who don't want a big environment or want a specific focus, she said.

Charters don't necessarily start out in areas where there are "failing" schools but rather in areas where people feel there is a need for choice, a need for an alternative, Jakri said. "It's a different way to approach education. There's a charter school in Plymouth-Canton, where there's a wonderful school district.

"It's not, OK, you're failing. We aren't going in for a quick fix. It's how we approach our curriculum and how we challenge our children. It's not from one perspective but a variety of perspectives."

For more information, call Jakri at (248)427-1906. For more information about charter schools, in general, tap into [www.charterschools.org](http://www.charterschools.org)

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