



## School Smarts Parent Academy – Fact Sheet

**What it is:** School Smarts Parent Academy is a seven-session course that is designed to foster parent engagement in education and create parent leaders who will promote a quality and complete education that includes the arts in their schools.

**Why it matters:** Research has shown that parent engagement in education improves students' chances of success in school, across all socioeconomic groups. Parent engagement is a longstanding focus of the PTA and is a proven, low-cost way to help schools.

**How did the Parent Academies start?** Extensive research and planning conducted by the California State PTA and supported by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation found a high level of interest among parents in learning more about their schools and how they can help children. Based on that research, the California State PTA received a multi-year grant from the Hewlett Foundation to develop and offer in 14 pilot schools a School Smarts program, consisting of the parent academy plus an initial parent engagement night to which all parents in a school are invited. This is the third year of the program and School Smarts is now offered in 29 schools in eight school districts statewide.

**What do parents learn?** Topics that empower parents are covered during the sessions, including understanding the education system, communicating effectively, advocating for a quality education, and how important parent involvement is for children and for schools. The academies and materials are provided in English, Spanish and Cantonese. During each session, parents also participate in art activities, which build a sense of community and underscore the importance of a complete education that includes the arts.

**Where have academies been offered?** In the first pilot year, School Smarts was implemented in 14 schools in four school districts: Alameda Unified, Chino Valley Unified, Riverside Unified and South San Francisco Unified. During the second year of the program, School Smarts was offered in 23 schools in the original four pilot districts. In this current year, School Smarts is at 29 schools in eight school districts: Alameda Unified, Chino Valley Unified, Lakeside Union, Pomona Unified, Riverside Unified, Sacramento City Unified, South San Francisco Unified and Visalia Unified.

**Who participated?** During the first year, 345 parents enrolled in 18 parent academies. These participants were diverse in cultural background and in educational experience.

- 30 percent did not complete high school
- 61 percent were Latino; 18 percent were Asian/Pacific Islander
- 53 percent were Spanish speakers

This year, nearly 700 parents have enrolled in 31 parent academies at 29 schools.



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### Outcomes

The School Smarts pilot program was evaluated through internal assessments and surveys as well as a formal evaluation conducted by SRI International. Highlights of the findings follow.

- 85 percent of participants said their knowledge of the school system and how they can help their children increased dramatically.
- 80 percent said they were more likely to take action and get involved with their schools after completing the academy.
- The program fostered a sense of community among parents of diverse backgrounds.

### Quotes

"I have observed a definite increase in school involvement from parents enrolled in the School Smarts Parent Academy. Many of them regularly attend our monthly 'Coffee with the Principal,' and willingly share their input regarding making our school a great place to learn."

– **Ifeoma Obodozie, Principal, Sunshine Gardens School, South San Francisco**

"School Smarts is teaching us how to work with our kids to help them perform better in school. I'm so glad I joined, and I encourage every parent to participate!"

– **Parent, Buri Buri Elementary School, South San Francisco**

"School Smarts has already brought many of our EL parents into the volunteer ranks. Thanks for the program....."

– **Connie Daigle, Principal, Glenmeade Elementary, Chino Valley**

Alameda Unified School District has been very privileged to benefit from our work with the PTA School Smarts Academy parent engagement program. In 2010-2011, AUSD was fortunate to have PTA School Smarts Academy programs offered as pilot programs in four of our schools, thanks to the support of both our local Alameda PTA leaders and our Peralta District PTA leaders. We were so impressed with the 2010-2011 pilot programs that AUSD chose this year to help support PTA's School Smarts Academy implementation in every single one of our elementary schools.

– **Sean McPhetridge, Assistant Superintendent, Alameda Unified School District**

"School Smarts has created a new group of young and bilingual parents who have acquired a deeper understanding of their roles in the education of the children at the schools.

– **Marta Bookbinder, President, South San Francisco PTA Council**

For more information, please contact [schoolsmarts@capta.org](mailto:schoolsmarts@capta.org) or call (916) 440-1985.

For media inquiries regarding the School Smarts Parent Academy, please contact Michelle Eklund, Communications Manager, California State PTA, at [meklund@capta.org](mailto:meklund@capta.org) or (951) 314-3707 cell.

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