

School Smarts: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Why does my school need School Smarts?

- Parent engagement is crucial to student success. A well-recognized body of research proves that when parents and schools effectively communicate and support one another, student outcomes and school cultures improve tremendously. School Smarts **creates meaningful and diverse parent involvement by bringing parents from all backgrounds together in support of their common interest: helping their children and schools succeed.**

Is School Smarts only available to PTA schools?

- School Smarts is available to any entity that serves children and families.

In what languages is School Smarts available?

- The School Smarts curriculum is available in English, Spanish, Chinese (modified), Tagalog/Filipino, Vietnamese, and Arabic.
- School sites have the option to offer translation concurrently during a School Smarts Academy or offer monolingual sessions led by native speakers who receive training on how to deliver and use the program.
- A newly revised series of sessions, which can be delivered easily via video conference, are available in English, Spanish, and Chinese (modified).

Is there a cost?

- Yes, the School Smarts program is fee-based. [Click here for information on pricing.](#)

How is the program usually funded?

- Over the past ten years, school communities have used multiple funding channels to pay for the School Smarts Program.
- Title 1, Title 3, and LCAP funds can be used to fund School Smarts.
- PTA Districts, Councils and Units can fund School Smarts entirely or in-part as well as provide support such as with childcare and food expenses, interpretation, the recruitment of guest speakers, and connections with local PTA units.

What does the program include?

- The School Smarts Program comes with curricular materials , lesson plans, facilitator guides and CAPTA staff support.
- For in-person programs, curricular materials include a program binder, art supplies, and recruitment materials.
- Training for facilitators on how to use all the materials is also included.
- Arts activities are embedded into the curriculum to further participant learning and connect parent's understanding about the link between learning and art.

What are the intended outcomes of School Smarts?

- School Smarts prepares ALL parents by providing skills and information that help them:
 - navigate the school system
 - understand the benefits of family and school partnerships
 - engage with their child's school
 - develop communication and leadership skills to support future volunteerism and advocacy
 - cultivate relationships with other parents
 - learn how to advocate for a complete education that includes arts, science and P.E.

What do participants learn?

- School Smarts is a seven-session research-based curriculum *that* empowers parents with research, evidence, and new skills inspiring them to get more involved.
- After each session, participants will gain significant insights and knowledge to meet the following learning objectives.

Session 1: Parent Involvement: A Key Ingredient in Student Success

- Explain why parent involvement matters so much
- Describe ways you can get involved today
- Demonstrate how to help your child be ready to learn at home and in school

Session 2: Preparing for A Lifetime of Learning

- Recognize your child's unique strengths and how they learn best
- Discuss how to help your child develop a growth mindset
- Identify ways to grow 21st century skills and prepare for a successful high school experience to support college and career possibilities

Session 3: Understanding our Education System

- Describe the educational pathway options available to your child
- Summarize ways you can learn about how your child is doing in school
- Explain how to learn about how our child's school is performing
- Discuss a parent's role in school funding

Session 4: Understanding our Local School System

- Define who makes decisions at your school
- Describe ways to grow your relationship with the school board, principal, teachers and staff
- Identify ways to affect decisions made at your child's school

Session 5: Becoming an Effective Communicator

- List the differences between good and bad communication
- Describe the ways to build stronger communication skills
- Explain the importance of home-school communication
- Prepare for a successful parent-teacher conference

Session 6: Standing Up for a Quality Education

- Define what it means to be a leader
- State the different ways you can practice leadership in your school community
- Identify three ways to be an effective advocate

Session 7: Taking Action

- How to create an action plan
- Share what you have learned in School Smarts

Do participants need to attend all sessions or are they able to miss any and still receive their certificate of completion?

- Participants who participate in all seven-sessions will be best prepared to make a difference in their children's school journey.
- We recommend that participants complete at least five of the seven sessions to receive a graduation certificate, however, local program facilitators have flexibility to handle this as they see fit.

How is this program presented? Virtually or in-person?

- Since 2010, this program has been facilitated in person with groups of up to 30 typically at one school site at a time.
- Since the pandemic, the program has been transformed so that it can also be presented via video conference. *The virtual curriculum can be presented to large numbers of people across an entire school district.*
- In the future, school districts may find a blend of in-person/virtual training successful.

Who facilitates the training program?

- School Smarts trains local facilitators to deliver the program, access local resources, like guest speakers, and cultivate strong relationships.
- These local facilitators are often PTA members/leaders, teachers, teachers' aides, para-educators, or community liaisons.
- School Smarts graduates often go on to become School Smarts facilitators sharing their newfound knowledge and excitement with others.

How many participants can participate in a School Smarts program and can they be from multiple schools?

- Since 2010, this program has been facilitated in person with groups of up to 30 typically at one school site at a time.
- Since the pandemic, the program as adapted to meet the school district/site's needs. Contact us to discuss your specific situation so we can figure out the best solution together.

When is the best time of year to conduct School Smarts?

- School Smarts works during anytime of the year!

How do you encourage attendance and sustain interest?

- Offering childcare and meals/snacks is a great way to keep parents coming back.
- Participants share that they love to have guest speakers, like their principals, superintendents (even the mayor), attend sessions and that these guest speakers keep them coming back.
- Each week we encourage sending emails, personal phone calls, texts, social media posts highlighting learning objectives and special guests.

Are there marketing tools available to help in recruiting parents for the School Smarts Program?

- Yes! We encourage sites to host a Parent Engagement Night to share School Smarts. We offer support materials to make it fun and effective.
- We offer a set of best practices for your planning team so that they can reach successfully and authentically as many parents as possible.

How does translation work via the video conference option?

- School sites can offer translation concurrently during an English School Smarts Academy through their video conference software or offer monolingual sessions led by native speakers who receive training on how to deliver and use the program.

What does “customization” mean?

- Local facilitators are encouraged to curate the curriculum materials to meet the needs of their participants. For example:
- Participants who are parents of soon to be middle-schoolers may want to focus more time on understanding common core standards, A-G requirements, and standardized testing.
- A group of parents with pre-school and kindergarten-aged children may want to spend more time learning about the school system and with topics such as school choice and learning styles.

How can I help bring School Smarts to my school and/or district?

- Contact us! We are happy to answer all your questions, help you determine the best ways to deliver the program, and make a presentation to decision-makers!