



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Oct. 8, 2014

CONTACT: Valerie Martinez
(562) 789-4047
(909) 917-3368

Parent Academies to Come to Santa Monica-Malibu Elementary Schools

Award-Winning Program Empowers Parents to Help Children Succeed in School

Santa Monica, Calif. – The Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District is launching a series of academies to educate and empower parents at each of the District's 10 elementary schools. The School Smarts Parent Engagement Program includes seven comprehensive sessions that promote long-term parent engagement with a focus on a complete and high-quality education that includes the arts.

The program, scheduled to start Monday, Oct. 13 at SMMUSD, kicks off with parent engagement events at each school and is designed to attract a diverse group of parent participants. The Parent Academy follows with seven, two-hour sessions of approximately 15-35 parents.

The sessions will be led by school site facilitators who are effective adult educators and are often teachers at the school site. All facilitators are trained by California State Parent Teachers Association (PTA) School Smarts coordinators.

"By participating in the academy sessions, parents are not only able to invest in their students' education through active involvement, but also able to connect with the school community, with each other and with District administrators in an innovative way," said Superintendent Sandra Lyon. "This program truly exemplifies our goal to increase parent engagement at all levels."

The District has made parent engagement and community outreach a priority under its Local Accountability and Control Plan (LCAP), a document required by the state's new school funding system. The LCAP outlines student needs, as well as the funding and programs the District will use to reach those goals. The Parent Academy program is one that will help meet the District's objective of enhancing parent involvement.

--more--

The interactive sessions are conducted in English and Spanish with other language interpretation available if needed. They include multimedia presentations of material, individual and group activities, arts activities, homework assignments and discussion while using research-based, professionally developed curriculum. On-site child care is also available.

"SMMUSD's investment in funding the School Smarts program underscores our District's commitment to the kind of meaningful parent engagement that truly makes a difference for our students," said Rochelle Fanali, Santa Monica-Malibu PTA Council President. "Santa Monica-Malibu PTA leaders are excited to implement and support this program."

The program is based on extensive qualitative and quantitative research and planning conducted by the California State PTA, which found that when more parents are actively involved in their students' education, the likelihood of student success is greater. The seven academy topics include parent involvement, preparing for a lifetime of learning, understanding the education system, understanding their children's school, becoming an effective communicator, standing up for quality education and taking action.

The School Smarts program, in its fourth year, is supported by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. Santa Monica-Malibu is one of only 13 school districts across the state involved in this program.

###

As a community of learners, the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District works together in a nurturing environment to help students be visionary, versatile thinkers; resourceful, life-long learners; effective, multilingual communicators and global citizens.