How do College Knowledge Academies strengthen the capacity of families?

Effective family engagement for college preparation involves early awareness and information to make the right choices and plans about high school coursework, family savings, work and earnings, and college options. An external evaluation on College Knowledge Academy, conducted by Dr. William Perez from Claremont College of Education, found the program significantly impacted parents’ and students’ confidence, college knowledge, and communication. The three year evaluation helped to decrease college attendance and financial aid concerns. In addition, the College Knowledge Academy programs increased participants:

- Valuing of schooling
- College preparation confidence
- Parent/child/school communication
- College requirement knowledge

Families In Schools

The mission of Families In Schools (FIS) is to involve parents and communities in their children’s education to achieve lifelong success. To learn more about FIS, visit www.familiesinschools.org or call (213) 201-3900.

For more information, contact:

Carolina Hernandez-Malone, Director
College Awareness and Preparation
Email: chernandez@familiesinschools.org
Phone: 213.201.3923  Fax: 213.484.3845
1545 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 700  Los Angeles, CA 90017
www.familiesinschools.org
How to Start a Program
Families In Schools trains staff from school districts, secondary schools and community based organizations to implement in their community our College Knowledge Academies – “College Smarts” and/or “Money Smarts.” Through a two-day training institute, facilitators learn about the program’s goals, objectives, implementation model and how to successfully strengthen parent engagement and support a college going culture. During the training, facilitators receive the following:

- **Overview of the five lessons** which cover parent/child/school communication, goal setting, college preparation and financial aid/financial literacy
- **Implementation guide** that includes helpful tips and information on how to replicate and sustain the program year after year
- **Best practice guide** for facilitation
- **Facilitator starter kit** (classroom set of materials and English/Spanish workbooks)
- **Program support tools** including sign-in sheets, outreach flyers, PowerPoint presentations, and tracking templates

What are College Knowledge Academies?
Increasing low-income student’s knowledge of what it takes to succeed in college requires an ongoing effort by everyone involved in their schooling (CHEPA 2005, 2006; Connelly, 2005; Pathways to College Network, 2004). The College Knowledge Academies are 5 week project based programs, for parents and their children, that promote early planning and knowledge about postsecondary options. The program provides to separate themes – “College Smarts” and “Money Smarts” – with interactive lessons focused on building parent/child communication, the importance of high school completion, higher education, financial literacy and college preparation.

Why implement a parent and student program in your community?
Effective college preparation involves early awareness and information. Parents and students from underrepresented groups are consistently the most misinformed about college costs, financial aid, and are likely to lack specific types of “college knowledge” that are necessary to navigate the complex college planning process.

“When educators reach out, families feel more prepared to help their children and more welcome at the school, which makes them more likely to be involved. Such engagement is associated with students’ earning higher grades.”
(Weiss, et. al., 2010).

**COLLEGE KNOWLEDGE ACADEMY CURRICULA**
The curricula consist of lessons that are easy to read, use and implement while remaining culturally relevant and interactive. This approach builds participants confidence and communication skills they need to ensure there is a plan for post-secondary education.

**College Smarts Lessons:**
- **Lesson 1** – The College Talk: Building Parent/Child Communication
- **Lesson 2** – The Path to College: College Basics
- **Lesson 3** – College is Affordable: Cost and Resources
- **Lesson 4** – Academic Success: Creating a Plan
- **Lesson 5** – Culmination: Review and project presentation

**Money Smarts Lessons:**
- **Lesson 1** – The Money Talk: Building Financial Habits Communication
- **Lesson 2** – Cash Smarts: How to Budget
- **Lesson 3** – Cash for College: Cost and Resources
- **Lesson 4** – College Smarts: Creating a Plan
- **Lesson 5** – Culmination: Review and project presentation