

Options for Sustaining the Academic Coach Position

School/District Funding

In light of the positive, measureable results produced by Play It Smart, most schools/districts are building funding for the Academic Coach position into their regular annual budgets. In these cases the Academic Coach is a member of the staff in a position that could range from a para-professional to a certified teacher.

Title I Funds

A large majority of Play It Smart member school districts and schools are eligible for and are currently receiving Title I funding as regulated by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). The purpose of Title I, as stated in NCLB: “. . . is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments.”

The objectives of the Play It Smart program are closely aligned with the purposes and principals of Title I and NCLB. In an effort to help solidify and expand the program’s reach to more student-athletes, several school districts across the country are currently utilizing and/or exploring ways to utilize Title I funding to create and sustain the position of Academic Coach.

Utilization of current position within the school

A number of schools have utilized a current staff member to serve as their Academic Coach (e.g., permanent substitute teacher, graduation counselor, etc.). In these instances the school’s administration made changes to the job description to allow that individual the requisite hours to perform the duties of the Academic Coach during the school day and after school.

School District Educational Foundation/Fund

Many large school districts have established Foundations or Funds to help support educational initiatives. Play It Smart qualifies for support from most of these funds based on the program’s focus on education, life skill development and community involvement.

Athletic Booster Support

Schools with a strong athletic booster club have received financial support to sustain the Academic Coach position through various fundraising initiatives.

Local Grant

Some school districts have experienced success with applying for grants from local grant making organizations, whether they be governmental, private foundations or corporations. A representative from the Play It Smart national office can provide support and feedback to the district’s grant writer during this process.

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Community Funding

Some communities have developed a volunteer board specifically to support Play It Smart in their local high school(s). The board usually consists of representatives from many different backgrounds: school/district personnel, local business leaders, college/university representative, alumni from the high school, members of the local media, professional sports team representative, community organizations, etc.

Designated Donor

On occasion, some Play It Smart donors designate their gifts to support a particular school or geographic area. In those instances, grants are made to qualified schools in accordance with the donors' wishes. In these cases donations have primarily come from individuals, organizations and corporations.

Graduate Assistantships/Student Teaching/Internships

Many schools have relationships with local colleges and universities that they've utilized to support the Academic Coach position. In these instances a graduate-level student has served as the Academic Coach and receives supervision from a high school administrator as well as an advisor from the college/university. The graduate student is typically in the field of education or counseling and uses the Academic Coach experience to complete his/her student teaching or practicum requirements.

Community Based Organizations

In some cases school districts have partnered with local community based organizations to support the Academic Coach position. Specifically, the organizations have utilized services that members of their organization (i.e. Americorps members) provide to perform the duties of the Academic Coach.